ARGOSY

10¢

Karl Detzer · Richard Wormser

ARGOSY

JAN. 1 WEEKLY

A Swap for Stonewall Jackson

By RICHARD SALE

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EXPOSURE?

GARGLE LISTERINE

When a person coughs or sneezes on you, the air carries bacteria and deposits them in your nose and throat. Prompt action with Listerine, which kills germs, may avert an oncoming cold.

DRAFTS?

GARGLE LISTERINE

Like wet feet, drafts are dangerous because they chill the body unequally, weakening its resistance to germs. Avoid all drafts, and when you have been in one, gargle Listerine.

Listerine kills germs associated with colds and sore throat

Tests During 7 Years' Research Show Cold Prevention Results That Amaze Even Medical Men

No remedy or treatment that we know of can show the brilliant clinical record in fighting colds that Listerine advances. Listerine offers you the possibility of getting off with light colds this year, or *no colds at all*. It is the new therapy that succeeds.

Tests made during 7 years of research showed this:

That those who gargled Listerine Antiseptic twice a day *had fewer colds, milder colds, and colds of shorter duration than non-users*. More important still—colds of Listerine users reached the *dreaded danger zone of the chest* less frequently than colds of non-users.

Why such results, that impress even medical men? Why is Listerine preferred to drastic purgatives that may weaken the system, vaccines that sometimes upset the patient, and those inhalants which may irritate the nasal passages?

Here is why: Listerine treats colds for what they really are—acute local infections. And the quickest way to combat local infections, as any doctor will tell you, is to kill the germs involved in them. That is exactly what the Listerine gargle does.

The secret of Listerine's success, we believe, must be that it reaches the virus (germ) which many authorities say causes colds. At the same time it kills by millions the threatening "secondary invaders"—germs that usually inhabit even normal mouths, waiting until resistance is low to strike. Among them are the dangerous influenza and streptococcus germs. These "secondary invaders" are the germs that complicate a cold and produce inflammation. *They must be held under control.*

Five minutes after gargling with Listerine Antiseptic, tests showed a germ reduction averaging 94.6%. Fifteen minutes after, 96.7%. Even one hour after, nearly 80% on the average. This amazing germ reduction gives Nature a helping hand, and materially reduces the risk of cold. That is a matter of laboratory record.

Use Listerine night and morning, and at the first symptom of a cold, increase the gargle to once every two hours. This pleasant precaution may spare you a long and expensive period of suffering.

LAMBERT PHARMACAL CO.
St. Louis, Mo.

FOR COLDS AND SORE THROAT

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What will you be doing — ONE YEAR FROM TODAY?

THREE hundred and sixty-five days from now — what?

Will you still be struggling along in the same old job at the same old salary — worried about the future — never able to make both ends meet?

One year from today will you still be putting off your start toward success — thrilled with ambition one moment and then cold the next — delaying, waiting, fiddling away the precious hours that will never come again?

Don't do it, man — don't do it.

There is no greater tragedy in the world than that of a man who stays in the rut all his life, when with just a little effort he could advance.

Make up your mind today that you're going to train yourself to do some one thing well. Choose the work you like best in the list below, mark an X beside it, and, without cost or obligation, at least get the full story of what the I. C. S. can do for you.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

BOX 2205-F, SCRANTON, PENNA.

☆ Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "Who Wins and Why," and full particulars about the subject *before* which I have marked X: ☆

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Architect
☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Building Estimating
☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Structural Draftsman
☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Management of Inventions
☐ Electrical Engineer
☐ Electric Lighting
☐ Welding, Electric and Gas
☐ Reading Shop Blueprints
☐ Heat Treatment of Metals
☐ Sheet Metal Worker
☐ Boilermaker
☐ Telegraph Engineer
☐ Telephone Work ☐ Radio
☐ Mechanical Engineering
☐ Mechanical Draftsman
☐ Machinist ☐ Toolmaker
☐ Patternmaker
☐ Diesel Engines
☐ Aviation Engines
☐ Automobile Mechanic
☐ Refrigeration
☐ Plumbing ☐ Steam Fitting
☐ Heating ☐ Ventilation
☐ Air Conditioning
☐ Steam Engineer
☐ Steam Electric Engineer
☐ Marine Engineer
☐ R. R. Locomotives
☐ R. R. Section Foreman
☐ Air Brakes ☐ R. R. Signalmen
☐ Highway Engineering
☐ Civil Engineering
☐ Surveying and Mapping
☐ Bridge Engineer
☐ Bridge and Building Foreman
☐ Chemistry
☐ Pharmacy
☐ Coal Mining
☐ Mine Foreman ☐ Fire Bosses
☐ Navigation
☐ Cotton Manufacturing
☐ Woolen Manufacturing
☐ Agriculture
☐ Fruit Growing
☐ Poultry Farming

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management
☐ Industrial Management
☐ Traffic Management
☐ Accountancy
☐ Cost Accountant
☐ C. P. Accountant
☐ Bookkeeping
☐ Secretarial Work
☐ Spanish
☐ French
☐ Salesmanship
☐ Advertising
☐ Service Station Salesmanship
☐ First Year College Subjects
☐ Business Correspondence
☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Civil Service ☐ Mail Carrier
☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Grade School Subjects
☐ High School Subjects
☐ College Preparatory
☐ Illustrating
☐ Cartooning
☐ Lettering Show Cards ☐ Signs

DOMESTIC SCIENCE COURSES

☐ Home Dressmaking
☐ Advanced Dressmaking
☐ Professional Dressmaking and Designing
☐ Millinery
☐ Foods and Cookery
☐ Tea Room and Cafeteria Management, Catering

Name.....*Age*.....*Address*.....

City.....*State*.....*Present Position*.....

If you reside in Canada, send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ARGOSY

Action Stories of Every Variety

Volume 278 CONTENTS FOR JANUARY 1, 1938 Number 4

A Swap for Stonewall Jackson—*Complete Novelet*...Richard Sale 6
A Civil War Tom Sawyer who saved a hero for the South

The Isle of Yellow Girls—*Complete Novelet*....Richard Wormser 26
There was a vaudeville show in the South Seas, but McNally couldn't bring it back alive

The World's Fair Mystery—*Second of five parts*.....Karl Detzer 51
A savant of science dies by the wand of magic

The Reef—*Short Story*.....John Earl Davis 70
In the night the Tempest returned for a passenger she had forgotten

Men of Daring—*True Story in Pictures*.....Stookie Allen 78
Andy Bahr—Reindeer Man

Little Man—What Next?—*Short Story*.....Weston Martyr 79
Next time your wife grows cold, wreck the washing machine

Loot Below—*Fourth of five parts*.....Eustace L. Adams 85
Purser Bronson leads the captives of the Cruiser into battle

Too Big to Lick—*Short Story*.....Frank Bunce 100
David slew Goliath with a sling-shot—Shorty used a headline

The Toast of Handsled Burke—*Short Story*.....C. F. Kearns 107
Northward by night they traveled, with a man who did not speak

Genius Jones—*Conclusion*.....Lester Dent 119
It takes an Arctic gander to cook the gangsters' goose

Mouse and Man.....George Preston 77
Argonotes 142
Looking Ahead!..... 144

This magazine is on sale every Tuesday

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, Publisher, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, N. Y.
WILLIAM T. DEWART, President

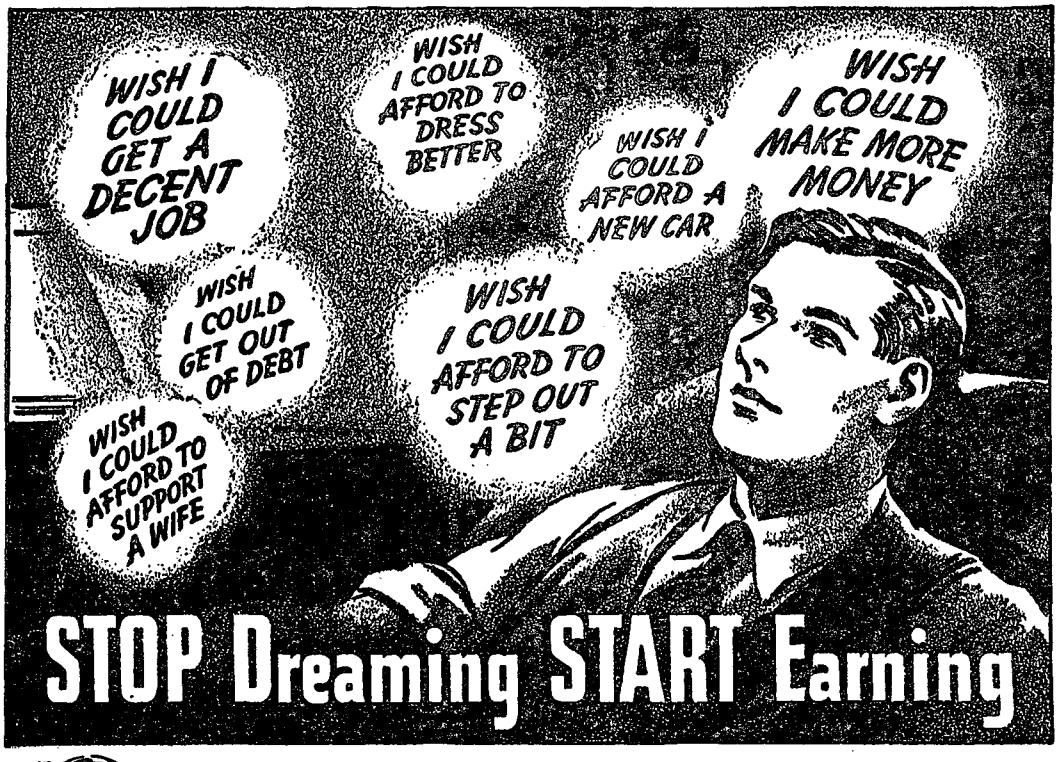
MESSAGERIES HACHETTE
3, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4

PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE.
111 Rue Resumur

Published weekly and copyright, 1937, by The Frank A. Munsey Company. Single copies 10 cents. By the year $4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; Canada, $5.00; Other countries, $7.00. Currency should not be sent unless registered. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Entered as second class matter November 28, 1896, at the post office, New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright and must not be reprinted without the publisher's permission. Title registered in U. S. Patent Office. Copyrighted in Great Britain. Printed in U. S. A.

Manuscripts submitted to this magazine should be accompanied by sufficient postage for their return if found unavailable. The publisher can accept no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Learn to Make $30, $50, $75 a Week

I will train you at home for good spare time and full time JOBS IN RADIO

J. E. SMITH
President,
National Radio Institute
Established 1914

Many Radio Experts Make $30, $50, $75 a Week

DO you want to make more money? Radio offers you many opportunities for well-paying spare time and full time jobs. Broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, station managers and pay up to $5,000 a year. Spare time Radio set servicing pays many $200 to $500 a year—full time servicing pays many $30, $50, $75 a week. Many Radio Experts own full time or part time Radio businesses. Manufacturers and jobbers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, servicemen, paying up to $6,000 a year. Radio operators on ships get good pay and see the world. Automobile, police, aviation, commercial Radio, loud speaker systems offer good opportunities now and for the future. Television promises good jobs soon. Men I trained have good jobs in all these branches of Radio.

Many Make $5, $10, $15 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

Almost every neighborhood needs a good spare time serviceman. The day you enroll I start sending Extra Money Job Sheets showing how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your training I send plans and ideas that made good spare time money for hundreds. I send Special Equipment to conduct experiments, build circuits, get practical experience. I GIVE YOU A COMPLETE, MODERN, PROFESSIONAL ALL WAVE, ALL PURPOSE RADIO SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT TO HELP SERVICE SETS QUICKER—SAVE TIME, MAKE MORE MONEY.

Find Out What Radio Offers You

Mail the coupon now for "Rich Rewards in Radio." It's free to any fellow over 16 years old. It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities, also those coming in Television; tells about my training in Radio and Television; shows 131 actual letters from men I trained, tells what they are doing, earning; shows my Money Back Agreement. MAIL COUPON in an envelope or paste on penny postcard—NOW!

J. E. SMITH,
President
National Radio Institute,
Dept. 8AK,
Washington,
D. C.

J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute, Dept. 8AK
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send "Rich Rewards in Radio," which points out spare time and full time opportunities in Radio explaining your 50-50 method of training men at home in spare time to become Radio Experts. (Please write plainly.)

Name.....Age.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LET ME SEND YOU THIS TAILORED SUIT

AND PAY YOU UP TO $10 IN A DAY

Amazing new idea! Wear this splendid suit and I'll pay for it if you'll follow my easy plan and qualify. Choose suit from fine woolens, Union tailored to your measure. Just show it to your friends. Make up to $10 in a day—easy—representing big nationally-known tailoring house. No experience needed. ACTUAL SAMPLES FREE! Write today for details of sensational new plan and actual Samples. SEND NO MONEY. H. J. Graves, Pres. STONEFIELD CORP., 1300 W. Harrison, Dept. A-708, Chicago.

BE A RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR

Make Good with this Special Training

MEN—19 to 50—trained as Railway and Bus Passenger Traffic Inspectors earn good pay to start and advance quickly with experience. Simple, home-study course qualifies you and upon completion, we place you at up to $135 per month, plus expenses to start, or refund tuition. Free Booklet outlines our 19-yr. record. Standard Business Training Institute, Div. 5001, Buffalo, N. Y.

Accounting

A 24-page booklet of interesting facts regarding the Accountant's work—pay and opportunities in business with 31 important questions and answers. Every ambitious man under 35 who is interested in business should read this booklet. A free copy on request. No obligation. Address PA11

American School, Drexel Ave. at 58th St., Chicago

BALD? Hair or No Pay!

Use SCALPOLENE for Dandruff, excessive falling hair, Itching Scalp and Baldness. Absolutely guaranteed. NO HAIR—NO PAY. Large outfit, $3.00. Particulars free.

RELIABLE SPECIALTY CORP.

1140 Lafayette Ave. Buffalo, N. Y.

FISTULA

Anyone suffering from Fistula, Piles or Non-Malignant Rectal trouble is urged to write for our FREE Book, describing the McCleary Treatment for these insidious rectal troubles. The McCleary Treatment has been successful in thousands of cases. Let us send you our reference list of former patients living in every State in the Union. The McCleary Clinic, D-107 Elms Blvd., Excelsior Springs, Mo.

NO JOKE TO BE DEAF

—Every deaf person knows that—

Mr. Way made himself hear his watch tick after being deaf for twenty-five years, with his Artificial Ear Drums. He wore them day and night. They stopped his head noises. They are invisible and comfortable, no wires or batteries. Write for TRUE STORY. Also booklet on Deafness.

Artificial Ear Drum

THE WAY COMPANY

726 McKerchey Bldg. Detroit, Michigan

MEN PAST 40

Impaired vigor, caused by tired, sluggish glands or mental and physical fatigue, is often strengthened after taking ZO-AK TABLETS for ONE MONTH—or money back. Zo-ak contains newly discovered hormone (gland activator), prescribed by many doctors here and abroad for this very purpose. Sold and recommended by all good druggists. Booklet by registered physician free. ZO-AK CO., 56B W. 45th St., New York. Ask for Economy Size and save $1.

STEADY WORK!

Good Pay

Reliable man wanted to call on farmers. No experience or capital required. Pleasant work. Home every night. Make up to $12.00 a day. Wonderful new proposition. Particulars Free. Write—

McNESS CO.

Dept. D-52 Freeport, Illinois

SONG POEM Writers

SEND FOR FREE Rhyming Dictionary and Writers Guide. Submit best poems, melodies today for our bonafide, superior OFFER.

MMM MUSIC PUBLISHERS

PORTLAND OREGON

Classified Advertisements

The Purpose of this Department is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needfuls for the HOME, OFFICE, FARM, or PERSON; to offer, or seek, an unusual BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

Classified Forms Close Two Months in Advance.

AGENTS AND SALESMEN

SELL NEW AND USED CLOTHING! Over 100% profit. Selling experience unnecessary. We start you furnishing everything. Catalogue free.
ACME MERCHANDISE, AC-1219 So. Jefferson, Chicago.

WANTED COUNTY DISTRIBUTORS
Excellent opportunity for earnings. Nationally advertised product. Large company.
Dept. 252 Fyr-Fyter Company, Dayton, Ohio.

No Selling! Steady work—Big Pay Daily.
Be My Local Buyer. Money furnished. Details Free.
PRUITT COMPANY
1208 Pruitt Bldg. Chicago.

MEN WANTED to supply Rawleigh's Household Products to consumers. Sales way up this year. We train and help you. No experience necessary. Pleasant, profitable, dignified work. Write today. RAWLEIGH'S DEPT. L-53-MUN, Freeport, Ill.

BE YOUR OWN BOSS! Operate used-new clothing business from store, home, auto. Over 100% profit. Everything furnished. Catalog FREE!
ROOSEVELT MERCANTILE, 550-AC Roosevelt, Chicago, Ill.

CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

USED CORRESPONDENCE COURSES
and educational books sold or rented. 4,000 bargains. Catalog Free. (Courses bought.)
MOUNTAIN, PISGAH, ALA.

500,000 USED CORRESPONDENCE COURSES and Educational Books. Sold, Rented, Exchanged. All subjects. Satisfaction guaranteed. Cash paid for used courses. Complete details and bargain catalog FREE. Send name.
NELSON COMPANY, 3040 Manhattan Building, Chicago.

MALE HELP WANTED

LOCAL AGENTS WANTED TO WEAR AND DEMONSTRATE FREE Suits to friends. No canvassing. Up to $12 in a day easy. Experience unnecessary. Valuable demonstrating equipment, actual samples Free.
PROGRESS TAILORING
Dept. A-109, 500 Throop Chicago.

PATENTS OR INVENTIONS

INVENTIONS COMMERCIALIZED. Patented or Unpatented. Send sketch and description of model, or write for information. In business 30 years. Complete facilities. Adam Fisher Company, 249 Enright, St. Louis, Mo.

SONG POEMS WANTED

SONG POEMS WANTED AT ONCE. MOTHER, HOME, LOVE, PATRIOTIC, SACRED, COMIC OR ANY SUBJECT. DON'T DELAY—SEND BEST POEM TODAY FOR OUR OFFER. RICHARD BROS., 61 WOODS BUILDING, CHICAGO, ILL.

WRITERS

WANTED
Manuscripts for Submission to publishers, producers. Write for particulars!
U. S. SCHOOL OF WRITING, 20-23 West 60th St., N. Y. C.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

• Mystery

JUDSON P. PHILIPS

No crime-busters in the annals of the detective story can surpass the noted Park Avenue Hunt Club. The creator of these famous characters presents them again in their most amazing case—"The League of Disaster". Watch for the next issue of

Detective Fiction

The Jan. 8th Issue—On Sale Next Tuesday

• Romance

ETHEL M. DELL

Once in a lifetime a great writer finds the perfect plot. The result is a story as fine as "Bondage"—the new romance by Ethel M. Dell. Here are characters you will love and drama that will live long in memory. In the new issue of

All-Story-Love Tales

The Jan. 8th Issue—On Sale Next Tuesday

• Adventure

EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

The world's foremost writer of imaginative fiction spins a new epic of the cosmic void—a novel of super-thrills and breathless daring, of fantastic adventure and strange romance. Begin "Carson of Venus" in next week's issue of

Argosy

The Jan. 8th Issue—On Sale Next Tuesday

Getting Up Nights Caused By Kidney Germs

Are you worried and annoyed by Getting Up Nights? If so, you should know that the true cause may be irritating Germs in the Kidneys or Bladder, which may also cause other distressing symptoms such as Nervousness, Leg Pains, Swollen Joints, Backache, Dizziness, frequent Headaches, Puffy Eyelids, Burning Passages, Loss of Appetite and Energy, so that you feel old before your time. Ordinary medicines can't help much because they don't combat such germs. The Doctor's formula **Cystex** starts fighting Kidney germs in 3 hours, checks pains, stimulates and tones the Kidneys and Bladder. Users often feel younger, stronger and far better in a day or so. **Cystex** must prove entirely satisfactory in 1 week and be exactly the medicine you need or money back is guaranteed. Telephone your druggist for **Cystex** (Siss-tex) today. The guarantee protects you. Copr. 1937 The Knox Co.

Home Study Accountancy Training

Accountants who know their work command responsible positions and good incomes. And the need for trained accountants is growing. About 16,000 Certified Public Accountants in U. S. and many thousands more executive accountants. Many earn $2,000 to $15,000. We train you thoroughly at home in your spare time for C. P. A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous bookkeeping knowledge unnecessary—we prepare you from ground up. Our training is personally given by staff of C. P. A.'s. Low cost—easy terms. Write for valuable free 64-page book describing opportunities in accounting field and telling how you may enter it successfully.

This Book FREE!

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

Dept. 158-H **Chicago**

ALL HUMBUG

Uric Acid Not The Only Cause Free Book Tells Why

If you want to really try to get at your Arthritis—Rheumatism—Neuritis—Sciatica—Lumbago, you must first get rid of the old and false belief that Uric Acid is all that causes them!

Read the Book that is helping thousands—**"The Inner Mysteries of Rheumatism—Arthritis."** In simple words this helpful Book reveals startling, proven facts that every sufferer should know!

The 9th edition is just off the press and a free copy will be mailed without obligation to any sufferer sending their address promptly to the author, H. P. Clearwater, Ph. D., 1954-C Street, Hallowell, Maine.

INVENTORS

Time counts in applying for patents. Don't risk delay in patenting your invention. Send sketch or model for instructions or write for new 48-page Free booklet, "Patent Guide for the Inventor." No charge for preliminary information. Prompt, careful, efficient service.

CLARENCE A. OBRIEN and HYMAN BERMAN

Registered Patent Attorneys

537-M, Adams Building **Washington, D. C.**

A novelette with the real Christmas spirit—"FORGOTTEN FAVORS," by Ed Samples, in the January issue of

RAILROAD MAGAZINE

Now on sale, 15c, at news-stands, or write to 280 Broadway, New York City

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By

RICHARD SALE

"Close—But No Cigar," "China Station," etc.

A Swap For Stonewall Jackson

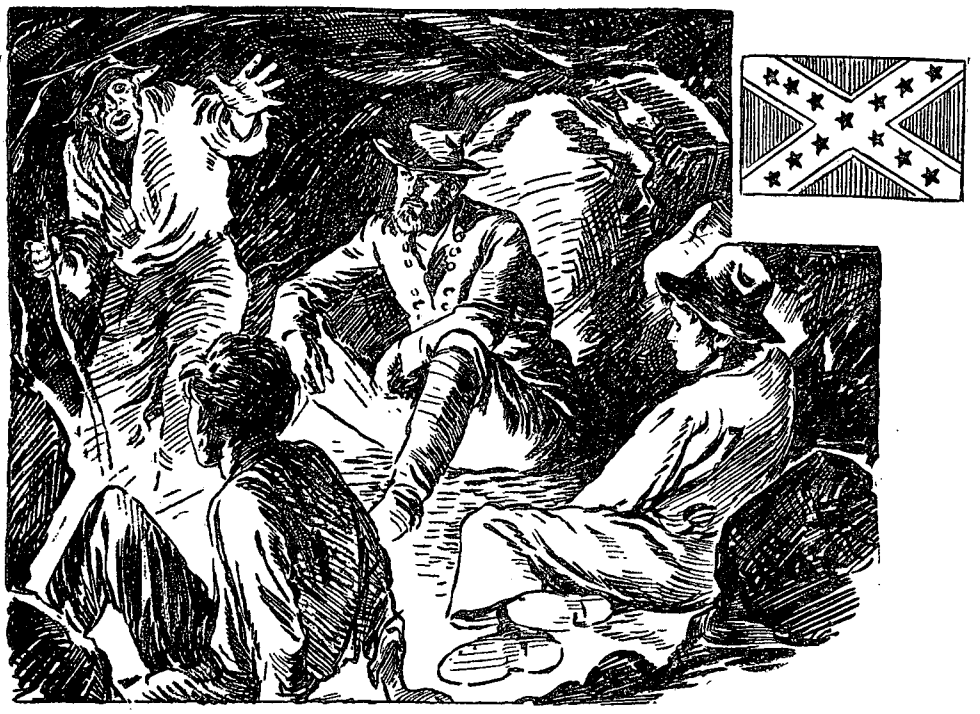
A Complete Novelet

I

LIKE Mr. Longfellow used to say when he wrote that poem about the midnight ride of Paul Revere: "Hardly a man is now alive who remembers that famous day and year. . . ." Only I'm not talking about Paul Revere. I'm talking about Johnny Ragoo of Lexington, Virginia, and what he did on that April morning in 1863. And what I mean by quoting Mr. Longfellow is that hardly a man is now alive who can tell that story about Johnny Ragoo and the Yankees in Lexington. I guess that Jeeta Dixie and me are about the only ones left who know the whole thing, because Dr. Caldwell and Stonewall Jackson and General Lee are all dead. And as for Jeeta Dixie, I reckon his memory don't work so good for him now because he must be 'most seventy million years old and things get confused in his mind.

I'm no youngster myself these days but just the same I'm sharp. I can remember everything about that morning in April because I was impressionable, just like Johnny, and I was with him the whole time. I lived with Johnny and his ma, the Widow Ragoo, all during the war because my Pap was a soldier with General Johnston down in Georgia and when he went away I didn't have any place to stay. So the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Widow Ragoo took me in, because Johnny and I were together all the time anyhow.

Nowadays it seems to be the fashion to debunk everything you've been taking for granted in your history books. Like Paul Revere, for instance. Nowadays it's said he never made the midnight ride at all. A friend of his did, and Paul got caught by the British before he had a chance to do any good. And another thing you hear is that George Washington was not the first president of the United States. And that it was really Edward Stanton's fault that Mr. Booth shot Mr. Lincoln. And all sorts of things like that.

So maybe it's time to do some debunking myself. There was another poem about General Phil Sheridan. I guess everyone knows it. The one about him riding from Winchester twenty miles away to turn the rout of his army into a victory. Maybe I am a Johnny Reb, but I always sort of looked up to General Sheridan in that poem. That is, until I remember Johnny Ragoo. And then I can't help laughing at General Sheridan.

Because Johnny Ragoo was only fourteen years old, mind you, defeated the whole blanking army of General Sheridan all by himself and what's more he did it in three days and without firing a shot. . . .

They tell this story in Virginia of the time when Phil Sheridan and his men rode into Lexington and the life of Stonewall Jackson wasn't worth a Confederate paper dollar

I WAS staying with the Widow Ragoo, like I said. It was April in '63 and the war was right in the middle of its duration. Those were

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kind of sad days in the Ragoo house because the Widow Ragoo had only been a widow for a month or so. Her husband had been killed at Second Manassas.

Johnny Ragoo was a sharp lad. He wasn't as tall as I was, though we were of the same age, and he didn't weigh near as much, but he could think a lot faster and even the older folks often said that Johnny thought and acted like a man in child's dress. His hair was black as coal and very wavy and his eyes were gray and clear. He didn't talk so much when he had nothing to say. I remember the time we climbed House Mountain in the rain and sat up on the rocks overlooking the whole Shenandoah Valley. We could see the Alleghenies in the west and the blue ridges of the mountains in the east. And down between them, we could see the spires of Lexington, sleeping down there in the mountain mist and wetted by the northeast rain. And I started to say something about it was worth the climb to get a look at it all, and Johnny Ragoo said:

"Cork, you talk too much when you don't mean nothin'."

I said: "What do you mean, Johnny?"

He said: "Talk is too cheap, Cork. There's too much talk. My pap always said to me that silence was golden and everytime you talked without meanin' anything, you was robbin' yourself of your own gold."

And I replied: "I just said the view was worth the climb."

"Sure," he said. "And dang-blank, that's just what I'm meanin'. You don't have to say so. It goes without sayin'."

And I saw what he meant and kept quiet.

This morning in April—it was the nineteenth, I think—1863, Johnny and I woke up and heard thunder. I was sleepy and I muttered: "Fixing to rain."

But Johnny Ragoo said: "Thunder rolls and that ain't thunder. It's so dang-blank steady." And he jumped out of bed and ran to the window.

The thunder kept on.

I got up, too, then and ran to the window and we looked out. And there wasn't a sign of rain in the sky. The sun was breaking out of bed raw and red over the top of the mountain behind Buena Vista, ten miles east. The whole dawn kind of hung in a red haze up there and looked pretty. Overhead, the sky was real blue and full of little puffy clouds, clean and white. It was a perfect day.

The Widow Ragoo's house was up atop Brushy Hill. And we could see just about any part of town from the watchtower upstairs. So we got dressed and went up. The watchtower was a square cubicle right on the roof and Old Man Ragoo had built it so's he could watch his slaves working in the fields. That was when he had had money and could afford slaves. When he'd got poor, he'd sold them all.

From the watchtower we could see the whole town. Everything looked peaceful enough. Washington College looked sound asleep down there on the bright green campus. There was spring in the air and the rhododendron were beginning to break out. North, we could see the battlements of the Military Institute, standing out against the morning sky. They looked proud and very bold, with the glorious Stars and Bars floating in the wind. The North River wound down past the foot of the battlements like a silvery snake.

"I'll be dang-blanked!" Johnny Ragoo said suddenly. "Cork, the bridge is burnin'!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I TOOK a look and it was true. Somebody was burning the covered bridge. It was the only bridge across the river and if you were coming to Lexington from Staunton, you had to cross that bridge to get into town. It was too far away to see real well, but there was a lot of blue smoke in the air that way, and it looked as if it was near the end of its burning, as though it had been going on a long time.

"When did it burn?" I asked. "I never heard the fire gong all night. But it's about through. It musta been burning a long time."

"Look," Johnny Ragoo said, ignoring me. "Just look at Shaner Hill across the river."

I looked at Shaner Hill which was a faraway off. I thought I could see a lot of little ants running around. It seemed like there were hundreds of them. They were men. And I saw a puff of white smoke from the top of Shaner Hill, and I heard thunder after a few seconds.

Johnny Ragoo gripped my arm. "Watch!"

Another puff of white smoke shot up, only this time it was on top of the battlements of V.M.I. and while we watched, a piece of the battlement went tumbling off and down into the river and we could hear the dull crash.

"Cannon!" said Johnny Ragoo. "That's cannonadin'!" He pointed soberly toward Shaner Hill. "Them is dang-blanked Yankees, Cork! We're bein' invaded by the Yankees!"

"Johnny, look!" I yelled, pointing. "You ain't seen them all!" And I waved frantically. "Look down there toward Natural Bridge Road! I see more of them!"

"Dang-blank!" Johnny Ragoo said fiercely. "They've flanked the town! Them Yanks have come down around Buena Vista way and they're closin' in from the north and the south and the east—"

"And the west!" I turned and stared. "They're coming across the fields by the ruins of Liberty Hall! They musta crossed the river up at Goshen Pass! They've surrounded the town!"

"Dang-blank," said Johnny Ragoo quietly.

We both thought of the same thing then. And I got scared.

You see, it wasn't just a case of them Yankees surrounding Lexington. That wasn't the bad part of it.

The bad part was that they had surrounded General Stonewall Jackson.

II

THE Army of Virginia was over near Spottsylvania right then resting up and waiting for the Union Armies to attack there. And in the lull of battle, General Stonewall Jackson had come home to see his wife and bring some messages to the Lexington townsfolk. General Jackson lived in Lexington, you see. He'd been heading the Military Institute from 1850 until the war broke out, when he left with some officers and the Stonewall Brigade.

Johnny Ragoo and I knew Stonewall Jackson was in town all right because we'd seen him and touched him two nights before right in the living room of the Ragoo house when he came to extend his sympathies to the Widow Ragoo. Old Man Ragoo and General Jackson had been pretty good friends and the General was real sad when he came. "I heard about Second Manassas from Mrs. Jackson, ma'm," he said to the Widow Ragoo. "I want to offer my deepest condolences. God moves in mysterious ways, ma'm. . . ."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

General Stonewall was a very religious man.

After awhile, Johnny and I got up our nerve and we stole into the living room and we stood around there waiting to get introduced. The Widow Ragoo tried to shoo us out a couple of times by shaking her kerchief at us, but Johnny Ragoo wouldn't move, and naturally I wouldn't either, if he didn't. So soon the Widow said: "General, you must forgive the impertinence of these lads—"

And Stonewall glanced around and saw us. "Not at all," he said, and his voice was rich and wonderful. "I would like the pleasure of meeting Mr. Ragoo's son."

"You flatter me, General," Johnny Ragoo said. "And what my ma says is true. But Cork and me couldn't help but want to see the man who can lick ten-dang-blank Yankees with one hand tied behind him—"

Stonewall's eyes twinkled and he ran his hand through his dark beard. He wasn't a very tall man but he was broad and he looked very strong. He had the mildest eyes in the world and a soft sort of face and a beautiful full beard. The sword at his side hung down to the floor. His boots went all the way up to his hips. He was dressed in a gray uniform with lots of gold buttons on it. There were three golden stars around his collar. His forehead went way back sweepingly. "You underestimate the Federals," he said quietly. "They are courageous fellows and fine soldiers."

"But Jeeta says," I replied somewhat boldly, "that it takes ten Feds to lick any one Southerner."

"This is Cork Wilson, General," said Johnny Ragoo. "He's my friend. His pap is fightin' down in Georgia."

"How do you do, sir," said Stonewall, and he shook hands with me. I didn't wash my right hand for weeks afterward.

We talked to the general for a while and he was real nice. We asked him lots of questions about fighting and about General Lee and Johnny Ragoo said, "I wisht I was a soldier in your brigade, General. I'd give them dang-blank Yanks what for!"

Stonewall smiled sadly. He said, "I trust that God, in his divine providence, will end this war before you grow into a uniform, my boy."

Johnny Ragoo frowned. "The war'll last a long time, sir."

I said, "We asked Jeeta and Jeeta said it would last years more and that there'd be a lot of men killed and that we would lose. We said if he went on that way any more, we'd tan his hide for him."

Stonewall smiled. "May I ask who Jeeta is?"

"Jeeta's our conjure man," Johnny said severely.

The Widow Ragoo smiled at the General. "Jeeta Dixie, General. The only darkie we have on the place. He wouldn't leave when we tried to sell him. He said he'd only run away and come back again. So we kept him."

"I trust," General Stonewall said, smiling, "that Jeeta's vision of the fruits of this war may be mistaken."

But now it looks like old Jeeta Dixie's vision was true.

WHILE we stood in the watch-tower that morning, the sun came up in earnest and the Federals over on Shaner Hill began a real bombardment. Johnny Ragoo and I saw the balls burst among the houses down near the place where the Limekiln Bridge had burned, and we saw men and women running south up Main Street

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to get away from the explosions. They seemed to be shooting at the barracks across the river but they weren't too accurate and a lot of shot went wild. But they hit the battlements enough to knock the whole top front down and then the Institute began to burn. There were barns burning down near the river and the stock was running wild all over the place.

It was awful.

After awhile we saw a lot of townsfolk running down the road toward Buena Vista. Men mostly. It was the only road out that wasn't enfiladed right then. The women and most of the children just ran in the streets looking for shelter.

I felt like crying.

"Dang-blank . . ." Johnny Ragoo whispered then.

I said, "Gosh."

"Do you think," Johnny said, "they'll kill him?"

"Gosh," I said. "He's a Confederate *General.* Outside of General Lee, General Stonewall is the best general we got!"

"I think they'll kill him," said Johnny Ragoo quietly. "On account of he's too good a Southern general to let go or even keep a prisoner. You know what we heard about these Federals. Jeeta says they're bad."

I felt miserable. I said, "Maybe General Stonewall got away before they attacked."

"How could he get away?" asked Johnny Ragoo. "The Federals have flanked him in the south. He wouldn't go west. The only way he could get back to General Lee would be by Lynchburg south or Charlottesville north—and there ain't nothin' but dang-blanked Yankees either way."

"Here comes Jeeta Dixie now!" I cried, pointing down the road to town. "He's been to Main Street. Let's see what he's got to say!"

We ran down from the watchtower and by the time we reached Jeeta, he had already cornered the Widow Ragoo in the kitchen and was wildly talking. Jeeta was the littlest darkie you ever did see. He was shorter even than Johnny Ragoo and his skin was black as night. He had big rolly eyes that stuck out of his head and looked mostly white and he didn't have any hair at all on his head. He was about twenty-five or twenty-six years old then, but he'd been born on the Ragoo place in slavery, and it was the only home he'd ever had. "Glory glory glory!" he said, half-crying. "Dis de day o' Gabriel, Miz' Ragoo! Dem Yanks, dey 'tackin' de town. Dey buildin' a bridge on de ribber that float by itself. Dey puttin' boats 'cross de ribber, den layin' planks on de boats! Dey be in town sho-nuff soon! Glory glory!"

"Has anyone been hurt?" the Widow Ragoo asked quickly. And you knew she was the kind of woman who would think of others first.

"Dey kilt an' dyin'," said Jeeta, rolling his eyes. "Dey be blown t'hell, Miz! Dem Yanks, soon dey cum and dey string us all up an' hang us dead! Oh glory, we gonta die!"

"Stop that, Jeeta!" said the Widow Ragoo. "We've work to do if the Federals are on the march. If they enter town, it means they'll steal everything they can find. Quick, all of us now, we've got to hide the food and the silver! Johnny—you and Cork run out to the smokehouse and gather all the meat together! Jeeta, you take the food from the kitchen while I get the silver and the arms! We've got to hide them all!"

"Whar yuh gonta hide 'em?" Jeeta

Try Avalon Cigarettes! Save several cents a pack! Cellophane wrap. Union made.—ADV.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

said. "Ain't no place to hide dese t'ings! Dem Yanks, they burn yo' feet and yo' gotta tell where de food and de silver is! Dem Yanks, dey turrible! Dey cut l'il babies in half! Dey de debbil's own demons! Dey—"

"Jeeta," said the Widow Ragoo, "you do as I say and the Yankees won't hurt you. I promise."

"But Miz Ragoo—whar you gonta hide dese t'ings? Ain't no place—"

Johnny Ragoo said, "I've gotta place, ma."

"Where?" she asked quickly.

"The limestone caves," said Johnny Ragoo.

"Glory be t' Gabriel . . ." Jeeta Dixie said in awe. "Yo' gwine down dere, son? In dat dark damp hole whar yo' lose yo' way and die?"

"Sure," I said. "We can take some rope and go down in them and we can always find our way out by following the rope up again."

"We won't take any rope," Johnny Ragoo said. "The Yankees could follow the rope down and find the food and silver."

The Widow Ragoo looked Johnny in the eye. "Son," she said, "I have to depend on you now. Those caves are dangerous. They can be more dangerous than the Federals. Do you know what you're doing?"

"I do, ma'm," he said succinctly.

"You won't lose yourself?"

"Ma'm," Johnny Ragoo said. "I could find my way in and out of those caves with a blindfold on my eyes."

The Widow Ragoo sighed. "God bless you, son," she said. "Be careful and keep safe. Cork, you watch out for Johnny."

"Yes, ma'm," I said. I was scared. I'd been down in the caves before, but never with a rope. I was scared, but I didn't show it. I didn't want to let Johnny know that I wasn't any better than Jeeta Dixie who began to roll his eyes and tremble.

"You bring wood down in a basket, Jeeta," Johnny Ragoo said. "Maybe—if we have to hide out down there—we can build a fire and keep warm. Gets a mite damp and cool 'way down." He turned to the Widow Ragoo. "Ma'm, I was thinkin'."

"Yes, son?"

"What of General Stonewall, ma'm?"

"I had hoped that he escaped before this attack," she said.

"No miz'!" cried Jeeta. "De gener'l, he trapped. He down in his old house on de college green. He gwine t'stay dere and surrender when dem flyin' Yanks cum get 'im! Dey gwine to kotch him sho'. He can't git out'n dis town nohow. I seen him on de front porch myself!"

"Gosh!" I said.

"Ah no," the Widow Ragoo breathed. "They'll shoot him!"

"Your permission, ma'm," said Johnny Ragoo. "I got to see General Stonewall, ma'm. If we can hide food and silver and arms in them caves, we can hide the general too. Please, ma'm."

"Of course!" she cried. "But hurry, hurry! Cork, you go with Johnny. Jeeta and I will pack the food up by the mouth of the caves. You can all carry it down when you get back. Hurry!"

JOHNNY RAGOO and I ran down the hill and took the stage-coach road into town. We ran hard and we ran fast. We were both panting and tired when we reached the fringe of Washington College's green. The town streets were filled with people. Everybody seemed to be running. We passed the old Inn and we saw a great hole

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in its roof where a ball had struck. Some one yelled:

"They've crossed the bridge! They made a pontoon bridge and crossed the river. They're marching up into town!"

We found the white-columned red brick house on the campus. There was a hole in the wall with black stains all around it. "Dang-blank!" said Johnny Ragoo in awe. "His house has been struck!" North, there were barns burning everywhere. You could follow the line of march of the Federals by the twisted trails of smoke which they left in their wake. They were very close. Now and then we heard a muffled bugle-call.

We went up the stone steps and into the house because the door was open and we yelled for Stonewall Jackson at the top of our lungs. And all of a sudden, without any warning at all, we looked up and there he stood, right in front of us, his eyes shining and curious.

He was dressed in full uniform, all clean and precise, his gauntlets on, his left hand resting on his sword hilt, his revolver strapped around his waist. He looked surprised.

"General Stonewall, sir," Johnny Ragoo said quietly, "you can't stay here, sir. The Yankees are marchin' into town and you'll be captured."

General Stonewall nodded soberly. "I have no other choice, Johnny Ragoo," he said. "I am cut off, surrounded. I must surrender."

"You must put yourself in my hands, sir," said Johnny Ragoo. "I can hide you until the soldiers leave. You must not be captured."

General Stonewall shook his head. "I will not run, young man. Better to stand and be captured than be shot in the back fleeing."

Johnny Ragoo looked firmly at Stonewall Jackson. "General, sir," he said, "you're the best man General Lee's got. You just can't be captured. Please, sir, follow us and we promise you won't be shot."

The general seemed to think for a few moments. He listened to the faint but approaching bugles and his face grew stern. "You're right, Johnny Ragoo. My own pride should not be considered. I will go with you."

"They're comin' close," I said. "We'll have to run."

"I have a horse," said General Stonewall. "We'll ride. Where?"

"To my house," Johnny Ragoo replied. "As fast as the bay will go."

The bay was, of course, Molly Jackson, the horse which the Augusta County citizens had given General Stonewall at the outbreak of the war. She was a fiery old steed, strong and fine and big. Johnny sat up in the saddle in the General's lap, and I sat behind the general, hanging onto his belt for dear life. That bay could gallop. We went out the highway toward Brushy Hill and Covington faster than a four-horse stage. I heard Johnny gasp, up front: "I hope you don't take cold easy, General. It's goin' to be a mite damp."

"I daresay I'm hardy enough," said Stonewall Jackson.

There was a roar of cannon then, louder than we had heard all day. V.M.I. curled in smoke and ruin and the flames went up from her middle. The general saw all this and his face looked pained. He'd lived there, commanded the Institute for eleven years. It must have hurt him to see it bombarded.

WHEN we reached the top of Brushy Hill and could look back down on Lexington and see at least a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dozen barns burning. We could see the long line of blue-clad troops marching up Main Street through the center of the town. Down on the campus, soldiers had set fire to the professor's homes with the exception of the Smith home which stood untouched. And even while we looked, the towers of the Institute collapsed and its arsenal began exploding and the noise was frightful. Blue-uniformed soldiers swarmed everywhere. We could hear the shouting and the crack of shots a mile away. Stonewall Jackson murmured: "That is the end, then." And the flames enveloped the Institute.

We reached the Ragoo home and we got down off Molly Jackson. "General, sir," said Johnny Ragoo, "you just turn the bay loose without identification, or they'll know you're around."

"If their spies are good at all," said Stonewall Jackson, "they'll know that anyway, son. But I am in your hands. I wager they will not find me easily." And he smiled slowly.

"But the bay will have a better chance of escapin' capture herself, General," Johnny Ragoo said. "They'll take every horse they can get. We must turn her loose."

"Very well, son."

"Cork, you drive her west in the pasture. Drive her past the onion fields and maybe she'll stay low by the blue grass."

"All right," I said. And I drove her off.

When I got back, the Widow Ragoo sent me up to the mouth of the caves. "They're coming, Cork," she said. "You can see them coming up this way from town. You tell Johnny to hurry."

I ran up the slope behind the house and into the brush. Soon I came to the big gray rocks and I groped among them until I found Jeeta Dixie sitting by a small black hole and moaning softly to himself. I said: "Jeeta, you black cat, where's the general?"

"He done gone down wid Marse Johnny," Jeeta said with a groan. "Oh, glory, dat's he las' we done see o' both o' dem! Dey die to bits down in that dark damp hole!"

"Jeeta!" Johnny Ragoo said sharply. "You'd better shake yourself down this dark damp hole if you don't want to be skinned alive by them Federals!" His voice came up out of the black hole quite distinctly.

Jeeta jumped. "Dey really do dat? Dey skin me 'live?"

"And then roast you!" Johnny snapped. "You come down and bring that firewood. Are you back, Cork?"

"I'm back," I said. "I turned the bay loose."

"Where are the soldiers?"

"They're coming up the hill."

"Cork, you go back and stay with my ma. I'm going to set the general and Jeeta down here and then I'll be up too. Don't say anything to the soldiers."

"I won't," I said.

"And don't be scared of them, Cork," he said. "They ain't goin' to hurt you none."

"All right," I said.

I left Jeeta scramboling down into the mouth of that black unending gullet in the earth, and I went slowly back to the house.

THE thing that I was most afraid of was the bayonets. They came up the hill glistening in the sun, sharp and cruel, and I got scared. My knees began to knock and my hands shook and I couldn't stop swallowing. I said to the Widow Ragoo: "Gee willikins, ma'm!" and she said. "They won't hurt you, Cork. Don't be afraid." And I

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

felt ashamed because Johnny Ragoo expected me to take care of his ma and here I was scared stiff.

It looked natural for them bluecoats to be trooping along through the blue grass on each side of the road. The blue grass was really blue-green but the two colors blended nicely and if they hadn't moved, sometimes you couldn't have told them Federals from grass.

But Lexington didn't look so nice. Lexington was nothing but a lot of fire and smoke and milling people. Some of the noise had stopped and the battery over on Shaner Hill on the other side of the river had left off its shelling so that it wouldn't drop balls on its own men.

We watched the armies move into town. Several platoons went by at the foot of the coach road to the Ragoo house, but none of the soldiers turned in. I began to feel a little better. I said: "Looks like they ain't coming in here, ma'm," and then I swaggered a little. "I guess they're kind of afraid to turn in here, eh?"

We went inside and we waited for Johnny Ragoo but he didn't come back. After a long time, we heard footsteps on the porch. I called, "Johnny!" and the Widow Ragoo got up.

But it wasn't Johnny. It was a Federal.

He was the biggest soldier with the nastiest face I've ever seen in my life. He was so big and broad he nearly filled the doorway and he came in poking his rifle with its glittering bayonet ahead of him. He had a black mustache and heavy cheeks and squinty eyes and he grinned at us and showed a lot of teeth. I was afraid of him and the Widow Ragoo was afraid, too, because she grabbed me and held me awfully tight. "Well, ma'm," he said in a thunderous voice, "the Yankees have come to town and they're hungry! Where are your stores?"

The Widow Ragoo pointed outside at the open door of the smokehouse. "It's empty," she said. "There are no meats. Nothing. The war has been hard—"

"Lying hag!" said the Federal. "You've hidden the stores and your silver and your arms! I'm no fool like some of these soldiers. I'm a Virginian too, ma'm, and I know the workings!"

I said: "If you're a Virginian, you're in the wrong army!"

He gave me a hard kick and knocked me into a corner. And then I wasn't so scared any more. I got kind of mad. He said: "Looks like it's the right army today, you rebel brat!"

"You dirty dang-blanked Yank," I cried. "Go pick on a man with a gun!"

He kicked me again but he didn't hurt me because I squirmed out of the way. When he turned back to the Widow Ragoo, his face was red and he was mad. "Where are the stores? Where's the silver?" he roared. "Any more talk outa you and the brat and I'll burn down the house!"

"There are no stores—" the Widow Ragoo cried, frightened.

"If the rest of this town is like you," he said, "we'll burn the whole place down!" He held his rifle in one hand and gripped her arm in the other. "Where — are — those — stores?" he snapped. "Tell me where you've hidden them or I'll snap your arm!"

I CAME up behind him and I hit him with the small shovel and ran. He turned to catch me and let go of the Widow Ragoo's arm and she hit him across the face. He got furious. He dropped the rifle and turned back to her and punched her, and she went down on the floor. In that brief mo-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment, I saw Johnny Ragoo at the kitchen window with a big pistol in his hand and he was aiming it right at the Federal's back.

Then there was a shot, loud and sharp and smoky. But I'd been watching Johnny Ragoo and I knew darn well that he hadn't fired.

Next thing, the room was filled with Union officers and a big man with a drooping mustache and three golden stars on his collar strode up, kicked the corpse of the Federal who had hit the Widow Ragoo and said crisply, "Get this dog out of here quickly! Madam, I must ask your pardon and must assure you that Union soldiers are not, as a rule, quite so ungentlemanly." And he swept off his hat and bowed politely while a couple of lieutenants carried the dead man out.

It all happened so fast, I didn't have time to be bothered by it. I'd never seen a man killed before in my life, yet the way it was done it seemed too natural, and I didn't feel sorry for the Federal at all knowing I would have done the same thing if I had held a pistol.

I LIKED the man with the droopy mustache. He was a dashing fellow even though he wasn't dashing in the way that Stonewall Jackson was. He was more on the Jeb Stuart type and his eyes were honest and steady.

"I perceive, sir," said the Widow Ragoo, "that you are a gentleman, but I risk rudeness by saying"—her mouth quivered slightly—"your uniform does not make you welcome here."

"I quite understand," he said. "But this is war, madam, and at the risk of rudeness, I must inform you that pillaging and occupation is a rule of war. Permit me, I am General Sheridan. This is my staff."

Sheridan! I stared at him aghast. This was the Yank scoundrel who was laying waste the Shenandoah. Everybody in Virginia had heard of Sheridan and, giving the devil his due, we had to admit that he was the Union Jackson. I knew I should have hated him but his eyes were too nice and I didn't.

"General Sheridan," said the Widow Ragoo, "I can only tell you what I told the Virginian. I have no stores."

"You have hidden them, of course. You Southern ladies are adept at hiding places . . ." He smiled broadly. "But you cannot hide your onion fields very well, madam, and I regret to say that my army has need of your onions. But that is not why I am here."

The Widow Ragoo sank into a chair. She was played out. I was all funny inside myself. The reaction I guess. "Then why, sir—"

"I am looking," said General Sheridan soberly, "for a young lad named Johnny Ragoo."

"He is my son," said the Widow. "Why"—her face took on terror—"what do you mean to do with him?"

"He will not be hurt," said General Sheridan. "I hope to procure information from him." He stared at me. "Are you young Ragoo?"

"I'm Cork Wilson," I said. "You Yankees are going to be sorry for this. I wouldn't be surprised if General Lee wasn't on his way here right now!"

"Ahem . . ." General Sheridan coughed politely. "I'm afraid, young man, that your manners need repair. And as for General Lee, he has his hands full at the moment, I bargain, with McClellan on his heels."

"McClellan the snail," I said, surprised at my own boldness.

They all laughed, and Widow Ragoo cautioned me, "Don't, Cork. Behave yourself." And one of the soldiers said,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Somebody ought to tell Mr. Lincoln this Johnny Reb's remark!" To which General Sheridan said: "Silence, please." And went on, "May I speak with your son, madam?"

"You may," said Johnny Ragoo. "Speak away, sir." He stood in the doorway of the kitchen and I could see the bulge of the pistol inside his shirt.

"Well, young man," said General Sheridan severely, "I have it on good authority that Stonewall Jackson is in Lexington and that, furthermore, you know where he is. What do you say to that?"

Johnny Ragoo half-grinned. "Oh, it's true all right."

"So?" said Sheridan. "And can you tell me the whereabouts of the gentleman?"

"Sure," said Johnny Ragoo. "He's right around here somewhere, hiding in the bushes." And he grinned broadly at me and winked. They all saw it.

"The lad is lying, of course," said a lieutenant. "Jackson has slipped. Which way, young man?"

"Why," said Johnny Ragoo, "how could he skip with all you soldiers surrounding the town?"

"This gets us nowhere," said General Sheridan. "There are paths through the hills no doubt, but he's got to double back to reach Lee and we'll pick him up. And a good catch, too. This lad lies with facility. Nevertheless, madam, I am stationing two guards here in the event that General Jackson is—ahem—hiding in the bushes somewhere. Blaine. Perry. Guard this house. You will feed these soldiers, madam. Attention, you others." He turned on his heel and went out.

We heard the horses gallop down the slope to the coach road.

I looked at Johnny and admired how smart he was. He'd told them the truth and they'd swear from now till doomsday he was lying.

IV

THE two soldiers that General Sheridan left behind to guard the house were very pleasant. Blaine, the younger, was from West Virginia. Perry was an older man, around forty, and he was from Philadelphia. They were very nice to the Widow Ragoo. Perry got firewood for the stove and Private Blaine even went out and helped us pick some onions for supper. That was all we were going to have to eat. The bacon and hams were down in the caves and we couldn't get them because we were watched like hawks. But you couldn't help liking the soldiers. Private Perry said to the widow: "As for me, ma'm, I'm a soldier of the Union. I believe in the Union, God bless it, and that makes us enemies, I suppose. But a soldier doesn't have to be a looter. And what I eat here, ma'm, I pay for." And he gave the widow some silver. Private Blaine said, "The sentiments, ma'm, are mine to a tee. Except that I have no silver."

The Widow Ragoo was overwhelmed I guess. She said, "It's bitter gall for me to say this, sirs, but I find that Northern courtesy outdoes the bad manners of the gentleman from my own state who was here before you arrived today."

"There are dogs, ma'm," said Private Perry, "in every army. Your own, no doubt, has its share."

Even Johnny Ragoo liked those soldiers. After we had supper we went up to our room and Johnny said, "I guess we won't kill them soldiers, Cork."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I looked surprised. "Were you going to kill them?"

"They killed my pap, didn't they?"

"Well," I said, "in a manner of speaking they did. Federals killed your pap. But I guess he killed some Federals, too."

"That's war," said Johnny Ragoo. "War's no good. You got to kill people who are nice only you don't know they're nice when you're killin' them. I guess if them Federals that shot my pap had known him, they wouldn't have shot him either. So we won't kill them soldiers, Cork. We'll have mercy."

"Were you going to shoot them with your pap's gun?"

"Yes," he said.

"I saw you aiming at the Virginian," I said. "For a second I thought *you* shot him instead of General Sheridan. You gotta be brave to shoot a big pistol like that, Johnny."

"Naw," he said. "No dang-blank different than my squirrel gun, only heavier and more recoil. We'll just take them soldiers prisoners of war."

I shook my head. "Sounds easy but how you going to do it?"

"You'll see."

"You'll catch what for from General Sheridan and them other Federals if you take these soldiers prisoners."

"No, I won't," said Johnny Ragoo. "You'll see."

"I don't know," I said. "They're liable to stay in Lexington for months hunting them soldiers. We got to get them out of Lexington. General Stonewall can't live in those caves forever. He's got to get back to General Lee. Why, there might even be a battle right now. That McClellan is after Lee. Lee is going to need General Stonewall."

"You're right," said Johnny Ragoo. "We got to get them Federals out of Lexington for General Stonewall. Tonight we'll go down in the cave and see what Jeeta Dixie can conjure for us."

"All right," I said.

SO THAT night when the moon was high, we got out of bed and got dressed and we stole down through the house. Johnny got his squirrel gun out from under the bed mattress and gave it to me and he carried his pap's big pistol. We got out of the house all right and we set out across the onion fields for the slope where the limestone caves hole was. The moon was out full, all big and soft and yellow and it was pretty easy to see the way. The night was a mite chilly.

When we reached the mouth of the caves, stuck there under a sloping flat hunk of granite, we paused a couple of seconds. There was a thin spiral of blue smoke curling up out of the gap in the ground. "They got a fire goin'," Johnny Ragoo said. "I told General Stonewall they could have a fire by night but not by day. By day them soldiers'd see the smoke. Let's go down." So down we went.

Now these caves were really wonderful things. All of Virginia is honeycombed with such caves and that is the truth. Up near New Market, they really had some wonderful ones, all pretty and huge down under the ground. And near Harrisburg, a platoon of Confederates had hidden out in the grotto caves for a whole week while the Yankee cavalry rode themselves sick searching for them. The thing about Virginia is this: under the ground Virginia is all limestone, like they used to teach in geology at Washington College, and the streams and water get running underground and they eat into the limestone and in a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

couple of million years, lo and behold, you got caves.

And in case you think these caves were just a hole in the rock underground, you're sadly mistaken. These caves were endless. You couldn't find the beginning and the end. Johnny Ragoo knew these caves better than the professors at the college and he had never found the whole stretch of them. There were four entrances, all scattered hell and gone around the countryside, and Johnny Ragoo once said the dangblank things probably went all the way over to House Mountain twelve miles west. I think Johnny exaggerated but there was really no telling.

This much you can believe. The entrance where we stood was up above Brushy Hill. The North River was a mile and a half away to the north on the other side of the burning Institute. Yet these caves went down three to four hundred feet under the mountain and they came out right in the river. Because the North River was at the very end of the twists and turns, and a professor at the college had once swum out. He had to swim underwater beneath the rock ledge at the end for thirty feet or so in icy cold water, but he did it and when he came up, he was in the North River way down by the Limekiln Bridge. That's how much caves there were.

We went down through the gap. It wasn't much of a gap, mind you, just about big enough for a man's body, and if you were going down for the first time, it took a little nerve because you figured you might get stuck. But when you got past the little hole up above, you found yourself in quite a good-sized cave, the size of a regular room, I guess. And then you really hit the downgrade, groping into narrow rocky channels that the streams had cut out. It was awful cold, the moment you got under the earth and very damp. Trickles of fresh water ran down the rocks and over head, when you had a torch, you could see the roots of trees where they came down through the limestone ceilings. There were stalactites and stalagmites hanging from the ceilings and on the floors. They looked like a bad dream. There were bottomless chasms if you slipped, and the going was very rough. There were shelves of rocks and different strata and then suddenly yawning holes you had to jump.

THERE were different levels in the caves where these fine rooms had been chiseled out of rock. We had Stonewall Jackson in the one which was down about the middle of the mountain. Mind you now, we saw the smoke at the gap up above, yet it took us about half an hour, climbing straight down on the wet rocks, before we saw even the reflection of Stonewall Jackson's fire.

All that time, we traveled in a blackness so thick you could almost taste it. It was a terrifying descent. I knew that Johnny Ragoo was utterly at home in the caves, yet the strange silent darkness, heavy with moisture and filled with a weird grotesque dread, ate my heart out and I was afraid. The sight of that small flickering red fire was wonderful. We reached the room and squatted down by the flames and warmed our hands.

Stonewall Jackson rose to his feet and said, "Good evening, gentlemen. I must thank you again for your kind hospitality. These caves are very comfortable when you get used to them."

"Dey all right wid a fire," said Jeeta Dixie who squatted in front of the fire like a little black gnome, "but when dis

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fire go out, dese yere caves, dey friz de marrow in yo' bones, dey do!"

"Were you followed, son?" asked Stonewall Jackson.

"I said: "Oh no!"

Johnny Ragoo said, "Cork, you're wrong as usual. We was followed all right. Both them soldiers followed us."

"What?" I said. "I didn't see them!"

"It's all right," Johnny Ragoo said. "I wanted them to follow us. I told you I was goin' to make 'em prisoners o' war and I meant it. Don't be alarmed, General Stonewall. You're in my hands and you're my responsibility, and I'm tellin' you, General, if the whole dang-blank Union army knew you was down here, they can't get you. They got to come down one man at a time and we can shoot 'em as they come. And when they get tired of that or run outa ammunition, or if we do, then they got to find us, and I know holes down here even a squirrel ain't found. And if they did find us we'd run for the river and take the chance on swimmin' out. I tell you, General, I could stand off General Grant himself down here and that's a fact."

"So it is," murmured Stonewall Jackson. "It had not occurred to me in that light. Who commanded this road, son?"

"General Phil Sheridan," said Johnny Ragoo. "He knows you were in town and he asked about you."

"Johnny told him the truth," I said, "and General Sheridan wouldn't believe him."

Stonewall Jackson laughed. "I've no doubt of that. General Lee attended West Point with Phil Sheridan. That's right in character!"

"General, sir," Johnny Ragoo said then, "I'm sorry but we all got to be quiet now. Jeeta has got to conjure for me. We got to get them Federals out of Lexington so that you can get back to General Lee on account of he may be needin' you. So we're goin' to conjure."

"Very good, sir," said General Stonewall, and he sat down.

"Yo' want me t' conjo' heah?" Jeeta whispered. "In dis dark damp hole in de ground? I'se libul t'scare mahself!"

"You conjure," Johnny said. "Or I'll fan your hide for you."

"Whut yo' got t'know?" Jeeta asked.

"We got to get the Federals out of here," Johnny said. "You conjure on how we do it."

"Oh, glory," said Jeeta. "Glory mine! Ah'll conjo' lak ah neber conjo'd 'fore!"

They all sat down around the fire. Jeeta Dixie began to roll his eyes. From a pocket he took out a little sack and began to pick materials from it which he slowly dropped into the fire, moaning as he did so. He dropped lobelia, white walnut bark, snakeroot, elder-blossom, bark of dogwood, and cherry poplar steeped in whiskey. To this he added, slowly and carefully, slippery elm bark, May-apple root, and sage-ditny. Finally copperas was dropped with some sumac berries, and the fire seemed to burn black as the resultant dye was produced.

BY THIS time, Jeeta Dixie was moaning and groaning and rolling back and forth, his eyes fluttering white and his mouth moving wildly. It was an eerie picture—four of us, two lads, a darkie, and Stonewall Jackson, huddled around a little blackish fire in the depth of a mountain-deep honeycomb. I was always wary of Jeeta's conjures and they kind of scared me because Jeeta was a real darkie conjure-man and when he was coonjining, he couldn't be beat.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Fever . . ." he whispered soon. "Fever and water. Dey goes togedder. Ah see de fever and de water and de sojers. De sojers dey git sick, dey gwine 'way from town. Yo' got t'make 'em sick from de fever and de misery strike dem down . . ."

Johnny Ragoo listened intently. "What sort of fever?"

"De red-hot fever dat mak de belly growl and lift high and mak dem sojers puke out. De red hot fever dat mak dem lie down and dey don' git up."

"What kind of fever is that, General?" Johnny asked.

Stonewall Jackson smiled. "It has the sound of typhoid, son, although I'm not acquainted with medical lore."

"Ty-foid," said Johnny Ragoo. "All right, all right, Jeeta. That's enough conjure. How do you get ty-foid, General?"

"From bad water," said Stonewall Jackson. "What are you thinking of, sir?"

"Why," said Johnny, "I was thinkin' we could fill the reservoir full of ty-foid and tell everybody in town not to drink, except the soldiers, and then they'd get sick and leave town."

Stonewall Jackson shook his head. "My own life," he said, "is not worth the risk, lad. There is too much danger. Some innocent people might drink of the water and die, your own people. And it seems a poor way to fight a war, with disease."

Johnny Ragoo sighed. "I know," he said. "I thought that too. Well then, I guess I'll have to use my other plan, General. I guess I'll have to get you to General Lee even if I have to walk you right through the whole dang-blank Union army!"

I stared at Johnny, wondering.

Stonewall Jackson shook his head. "I'm afraid, son, not even *you* could do that."

Johnny Ragoo smiled. "You are in my hands, sir."

At that, there was a short polite laugh that nearly made us all jump out of our skins. We wheeled and up above us on the stratum of rock which crested this particular part of the caves, stood two Federals—Privates Blaine and Perry, their rifles leveled at Stonewall Jackson.

Private Blaine said, "He is no longer in your hands, lad. He is now in ours. General Jackson, you are under arrest and a prisoner of war!"

Stonewall Jackson rose and clicked his heels together. "I am at your service, sirs," he said.

"Naw, naw," Johnny Ragoo said. "You ain't at their service. They're at *my* service. Sit down, General Stonewall. You ain't been captured. *They* have. Only they don't know it yet. Come down, soldiers. Come down and join us and talk this over."

"I warn you, General," said Private Perry, "to leave your pistol alone."

"I will not touch it."

The two Federals climbed down and joined the group at the fire. They disarmed General Jackson and they took the old squirrel gun away from me, but they didn't see Johnny Ragoo's pistol in his shirt. "Well," said Blaine jovially, "this is a good catch indeed! Sorry, General Jackson! The fortunes of war, you know!"

"Soldiers," said Johnny Ragoo, still sitting down by the fire, "the fortunes of war, as you say, have put you down here in the caves with us. What I want to know is: how you goin' to get back out?"

Privates Perry and Blaine stared at one another.

Johnny laughed. "It's black as night

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in these caves. Wait till this fire dies out. You can't find your way outa here. How you goin' to take your prisoner out?"

"*You'll* show us out!" Blaine snapped.

"You'll shoot me first," said Johnny.

"There are ways out of here," Perry blustered, staring around at the dark rock.

"There are four ways out of here," said Johnny Ragoo. "I'm the only one here knows them. Cork don't. Jeeta don't. And General Stonewall was never here before in his life. Four ways out, soldiers. Two for chipmunks, one for fish, and one for men. You got to find your way back to the hole that let you in. Think of it, soldiers, in the dark, findin' your way over holes that'll drop you to the devil."

"We'll not make conditions," said Blaine. "Jackson is our prisoner." He shivered. "You've got to leave here sometime. We'll follow you."

"In the black?"

"We'll follow all right."

But they didn't. When the fire died out and the cave went dark, an hour or so later, Johnny Ragoo nudged me and we slipped out and took the lower strata back. And when we were a hundred feet away, we yelled: "Soldiers, come on and follow and mind your step! There's death in these gaps!"

And we heard Stonewall Jackson laugh politely and say, "I'm afraid, gentlemen, that even as I, you are in their hands."

V

NEXT morning Johnny Ragoo and I went down to the college green and we walked over to military headquarters and we tried to see General Sheridan. The guard chased us away and wouldn't let us in and finally Johnny Ragoo said, "We know where Stonewall Jackson is, soldiers, and we want to tell General Sheridan."

That's how we got in.

General Sheridan was at a desk and he had his bluecoats all around him. When he saw us, he frowned, and said: "The little rebs again. What mischief is it this time?"

"Do you have a military pass?" Johnny Ragoo asked.

"I do."

"If you will put it on your person," said Johnny, "I will lead you to Stonewall Jackson."

The announcement electrified them. General Sheridan sprang to his feet. "What trick is this?"

"Are you afraid of a boy?" Johnny Ragoo said.

"I'm wary of one I must admit," said General Sheridan and he smiled. "May I bring my army?"

"You may bring them so far and no further," said Johnny Ragoo. "You have the word of Stonewall Jackson that you will not be shot. You will in no way be hurt, unless you decide so yourself. But you and you alone must accompany me to General Jackson."

"This is crazy," said one of the staff.

"And bring the pass," said Johnny.

General Sheridan set his jaw. "The lad is challenging me," he snapped. "He's challenging my nerve."

"How is it then?" asked Johnny Ragoo, and I shivered because I thought they would surely shoot us.

"Very well then," said General Sheridan. "It's a bargain."

He told an officer to bring a squad of soldiers up to the Ragoo house on Brushy Hill. Then, with his staff, we all galloped off, Johnny and me riding up in the saddle with two soldiers.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Johnny led them past the house and across the onion field to the mouth of the cave where we all dismounted. General Sheridan looked down into the cave and he said, "What is this?"

"Stonewall Jackson," said Johnny Ragoo, "is down there. He's already disarmed and being held by the two soldiers you stationed at my house."

"That's good news," said General Sheridan. "Let's get him."

"You gave me your word, sir," said Johnny Ragoo, "to go down alone with me."

"It's a trick, General," said an officer.

"That may be," said General Sheridan. "But trick or not, they come up here and if they come up without me, you have orders to shoot them unless you hear me alone to the contrary. Understand that, young man."

"Understood," said Johnny Ragoo. "Cork, you stay up this time. We'll be back."

Johnny Ragoo went down into the hole first. General Sheridan went after him. Then the wait began.

. . . It was an awfully long time later when we heard a scraping under the rock and everybody went to attention to see who was coming. And lo and behold, Johnny Ragoo stepped out first and right behind him came General Stonewall Jackson!

There was a stir among the Federals and the commanding officers stepped forward and cried: "Where's General Sheridan?"

"Down there," said Johnny Ragoo.

"We had orders to shoot you if you came up without him!" said the commanding officer. "You heard the orders!"

"They've been countermanded," said Johnny Ragoo. "Show them your pass, General Stonewall."

Stonewall Jackson smiled. He extended a military pass to admit the bearer through the Union lines and provide him with a safe retreat from Lexington.

And then suddenly, Privates Blaine and Perry came out of the hole too. They were able to confirm the truth of the military pass. Furthermore, they said, General Sheridan had asked that an escort conduct General Jackson to the edge of town.

"Has the general gone crazy?" asked the officer. "This is all madness, letting Jackson go scot-free!"

Private Blaine sighed heavily. "You wouldn't think it was madness, sir, if you were down in that damp hole. Don't you see what they've done, sir? General Sheridan should never have gone down there! He's marooned. He can't get up out of there without this lad. He's got to get safe conduct for Jackson in order to get safe conduct for himself. The lad's outwitted us!"

"We'll go down and get him out if that's all it is!"

"That's all it is. Captain, those tunnels run for a mile maybe two miles. They go everywhere. They're pitch black and wet and cold and you get lost in an instant. You couldn't find Sheridan in a hundred years!"

The captain bit his lip and remained thoughtful for a few seconds. Finally, grudgingly, he said: "Give General Jackson safe conduct to the edge of town and then return here."

"Seems fair enough," said Johnny Ragoo. "We get our general back and you get yours."

"We'll see what General Sheridan has to say about that when he comes up. General Jackson, you may go."

Stonewall Jackson smiled. "Thank you, sir," he said. "And I may add that my escape is an act of Providence.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It was no more clever on my part than losing me is on yours. I thank you, gentlemen, for your kindness."

"Jackson," the captain said.

"Yes, sir?"

"Tell Bob Lee that George Anderson was asking for him. We went to the Academy together. Someday, when we are all on the same side again, I hope to shake his hand. I'll shake yours now."

THE captain shook hands with Stonewall Jackson. Then Stonewall Jackson took a medal off his chest —a medal that General Lee had put there after the battle of Sharpsburg— and he reached over and pinned it on Johnny Ragoo's chest and he said, "It's you I fight for, son. You and your wonderful land. I know you'll be safe. I heard General Sheridan's promise of safe conduct. I bid you farewell. Goodbye, Johnny." He waved to me then, "Goodbye, Cork."

"You'll find Molly Jackson," said Johnny Ragoo, "by the Buena Vista road. I caught her and Old Man Caldwell took her over last night when the Yanks were sleeping on guard."

"Thank you all," said Stonewall Jackson and he rode off proudly in the midst of the Yankees.

. . . When General Phil Sheridan finally came out of that hole in the ground, his uniform was covered with dirt and he was mad as a toad in a snake's mouth. He cussed real violent and roared, "Hoodwinked, hoodwinked, by God! Slipped through my fingers! You young scoundrel, if I hadn't promised—"

"But you *did* promise!" Johnny Ragoo cried, a little anxiously.

"Strike your tents!" General Sheridan bellowed. "Break camp! Get out of this pesthole! We've been hoodwinked worse than you know! I heard this reb whispering to Jackson when we were down in the caves! Jeb Stuart is on his way here from the south with twenty thousand men! And that isn't the worst of it! This infamous young murderer has filled the town reservoir with typhoid corpses and Lord knows how many sick we'll have on our hands before nightfall! Head north through the Valley and we'll join McClellan before Stuart arrives to reinforce Lee!" And they all galloped off.

"Well," Johnny Ragoo sighed as the twilight began to come down, "well, Cork, I guess we did it. They didn't even take the onions from the field. They'll stay here for General Lee's men all right. Dang-blank! I clean forgot about Jeeta! He's down in them caves alone. Glory, glory, that darkie'll be faintin' from fear! We got to go down and get him, Cork."

"But wait a minute, Johnny," I said. "I still don't understand! How the devil did you get General Sheridan to—"

"Why, that was easy," Johnny Ragoo said absently. "I'm surprised you didn't figger it, Cork. When I took General Sheridan down there, I took him to the west caves where the Cyclops tower is—you know—that rock stickin' up with a gap all around it. I led him onto it and then I went back in the dark and he didn't know where to jump to get off of it. And if you miss that jump, you know where you land, Cork."

"In the river," I said. "A dang-blank mile below!"

"So I made terms with him and went back and got the military pass. And then I left him and got the Federals and General Stonewall and brought them out. And when General Stonewall was safe, I went back and brought out

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

General Sheridan. He yelled for help the whole time but them Federals was too scared of the caves and it was so blamed pitch in there they wouldn't've found him in a million years."

"Gosh," I said, "you sure fixed him, Johnny."

"Well, you know," Johnny Ragoo said, "them Yanks wasn't such bad men I'd heard they was. That General Sheridan, he was right nice the way he took it all. He kept his word. I figgered maybe he'd shoot you and me for this, but he kept his word and didn't. Makes me 'shamed, almost for tellin' such lies about us puttin' ty-foid corpses in the reservoir and about Jeb Stuart comin'."

"What?" I said. "Wasn't any of that true?"

"Naw," said Johnny Ragoo. "I only whispered that in the dark and General Sheridan heard me and thought I was talking to General Stonewall. He thought he was overhearin' a military secret!"

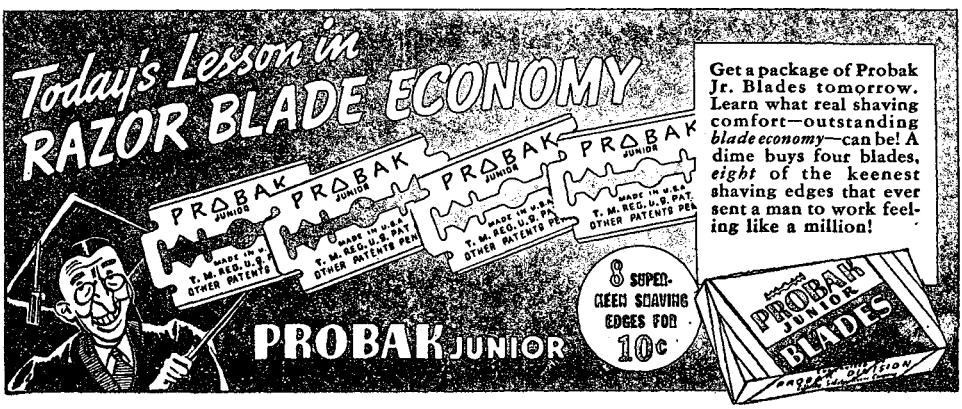
"Oh," I said. "Gosh, I know one Federal general who's going to be mad with you when he finds out."

And just then the Widow Ragoo called: "Cork! Johnny! Supper's fixing! Go get the bacon and the ham and bring Jeeta up from the caves!"

It was nightfall then and the Union Army was gone and Lexington was picked clean like the bones of a cow on a desert. And from the top of Brushy Hill we could see the lines of them, on the march to Timber Ridge, going north with bugles blowing and banners flying in the wind.

And standing there, making believe we could see all the way east to the Buena Vista pike where the road curled skyward up into the mountains, we fancied we could make out the lone horseman galloping along there on a fiery charging bay: General Stonewall Jackson, going to meet his God. I've thought about it a lot since then and it seems kind of strange. We saved Stonewall Jackson from the Yankees, only to have him ride off to a town called Chancellorsville where he was to die accidentally at the hands of his own men three weeks later. . . .

And that's how Johnny Ragoo defeated the whole Union Army without firing a single shot, and if you don't believe me, the next time you're in Lexington, Virginia, you get a man to show you the caves where Johnny hid Stonewall Jackson from the enemy. Only they've got a rope that goes down into the caves now, and you won't get lost like General Sheridan did.



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Isle of Yellow Girls

A Complete Novelet

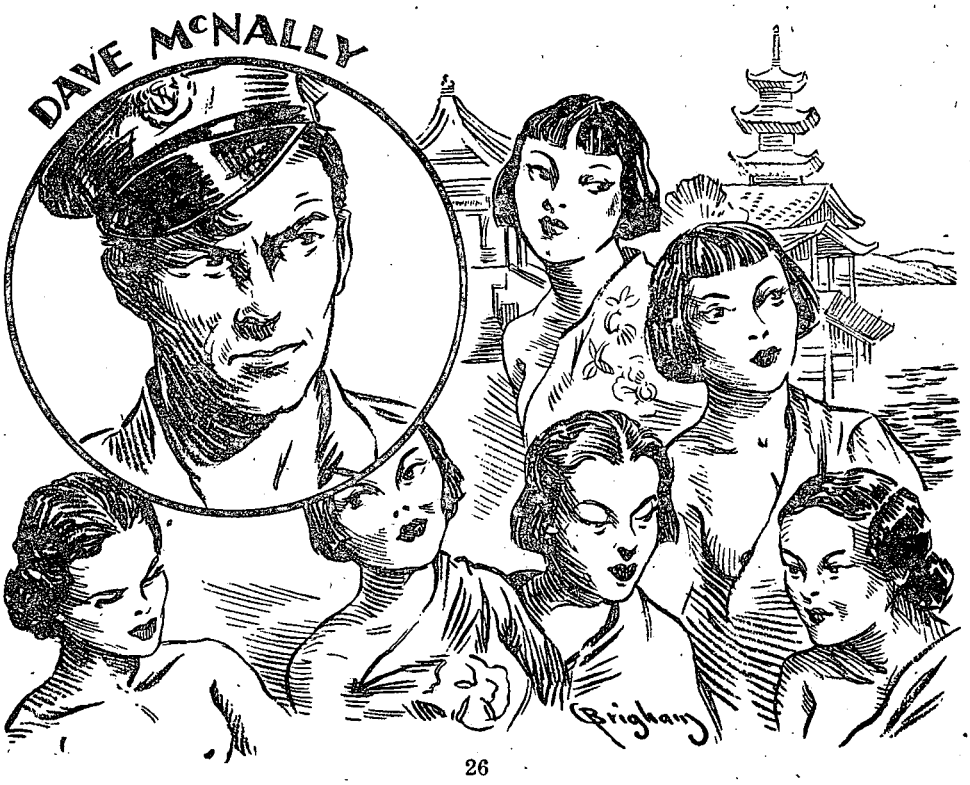
I

DAVE McNALLY lay on the deck of the *President,* just under the shadow of the cargo boom. The ship was rolling gently, just enough so he could—on a good roll—see a touch of horizon without moving off his back. The sun came down and baked him, and he felt good.

A Kanaka deck hand had been unnecessarily polishing shining brass near him for fifteen minutes. The man, Mac knew, wanted to talk to him; but let it come, let it come. His last expedition had been to the Aleutian Islands after a cargo of bears and seals, and he had had his marrow-full of cold; the Pacific sun made him feel fine, he could tell it was reaching right through him. He had no intention of moving or raising his voice, or doing any other of the silly things more active passengers did.

Finally the Kanaka said, in slightly guttural English: "You are Mr. McNally, sir?"

"That's right," Mac said. He opened his eyes under his sun-goggles, looked



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By RICHARD WORMSER

Author of "McGlusky's Lucky Day," and the Dave McNally Stories

at the brawny islander, smiled, and closed his eyes again.

"My brother, Frank, sailed with you some years ago," the Kanaka said. "About ten years ago."

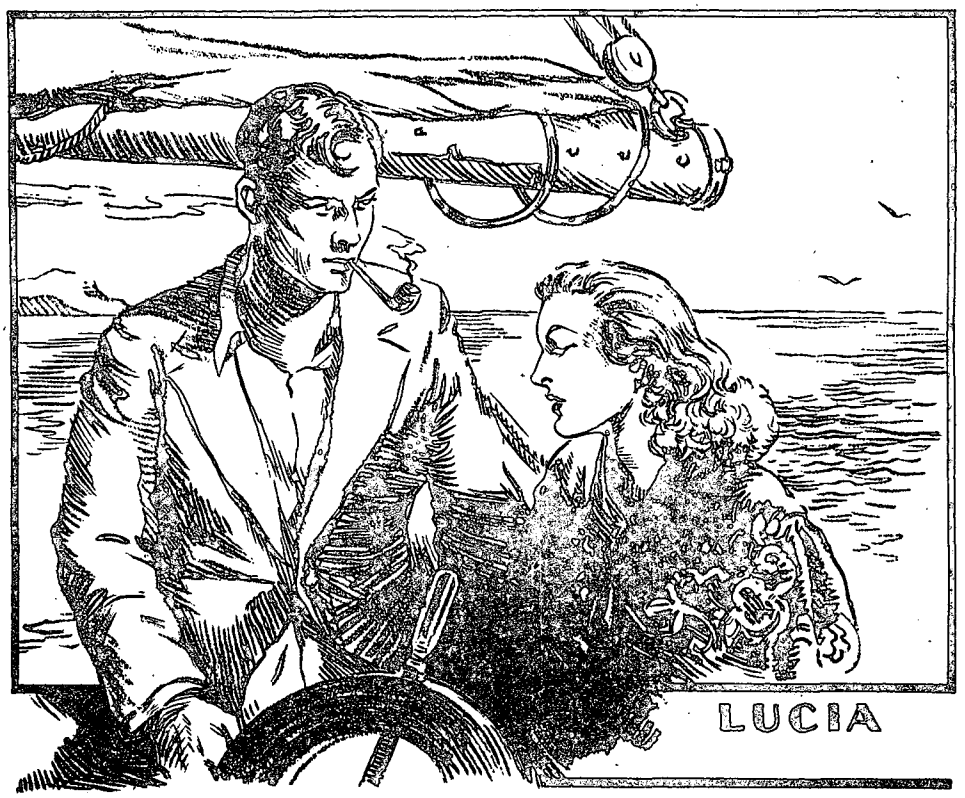
"Yeah?" Mac thought back. "That wasn't a bad trip for those days—I was assembling an orchestra and some hula dancers for a chain of theaters. Yeah, I remember. Your last name is Panaki, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir!" The Kanaka was pleased. "My name is Tom. Frank has a shop now, back in Hawaii; it is too bad, sir, you did not know; you could have visited him and honored his household."

An Hawaiian Eagle Scout and a Broadway Frank Buck sail the South Seas to an island of intrigue and sirens like machines

"You boarded the ship at Hawaii, Tom?" Mac didn't mind talking as long as he didn't have to move. "I didn't notice you on the way out from the mainland."

"Yes, Mr. McNally. I am working my way to the Philippines; last month I was twenty-one, and my father told me to go away and see the world. Frank traveled for a year before he settled down and my middle brother, Larry. Now I go. I have noticed you since we left home, Mr. McNally; al-



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ways you lie here—not up with the passengers. Are you ill, sir?"

"Naw," the theater man said. "My honored fellow passengers have bad case of Hawaiianitis. They are all busy learning Hawaiian to use on the way home. Tell me, Tom, what gets into people who visit the Islands? They come away poi-ing and aloha-oeing like they were ashamed of knowing English."

Tom laughed politely. "I do not know, sir. I do not think there are any natives who do not speak English; like my brothers, I am a high school graduate. You go to collect another orchestra?"

Mac said: "No. I've risen above orchestras, Tom. I'm the biggest collector of theatrical novelties in the world; I'll show you the clipping to prove it. Buck gets more animals, but I get human acts too. Now I've got a project on the fire that would make your black hair stand on end, kid; I've heard about the new island they discovered; the one that's supposed to have been isolated so long that evolution passed it by. It probably doesn't exist."

"You are right, sir. I saw the story in the newspapers, but considered it a mere sailor's yarn. But you must have become very wealthy, Mr. McNally, to take such a long trip on such small hope."

"Not I, Tommy. McNally always has an ace in the hole. I'm going to pick up a half-dozen pearl nurses and take 'em for a swimming and diving exhibition; if I can get bathing suits on those Jay girls, they ought to wow 'em on the county-fair circuit."

"I should like to see that, sir. I hear those girls can swim circles around the best Islander."

"Not to mention the fact the swimming-suits—as already mentioned—are strictly tabu. You're through with this ship at Manila, and you're hitting me for a job. Right?"

"You are psychic, Mr. McNally."

"What can you do, Tommy?"

"I took a prize in chemistry at high school, Mr. McNally, and also studied the usual curriculum. I was editor of my school paper, and played on the varsity football team. Also I have some business experience from serving in my brother's shop after school."

"Can you sail a boat, Tom?"

The boy smiled.

"I am a Hawaiian, sir. And I have my Red Cross for first-aid and life-saving. I was an Eagle Boy Scout and—"

"Whoa, Tommy, whoa! You'll be giving the boss an inferiority complex. You're hired when we get to Manila, get my bags out of stateroom ninety-two and wake me up. I've just come back from Alaska and I'm still a little frozen around the middle. Now go away, and let me sleep."

"Yes, Mr. McNally."

"Oh, and Tommy—"

"Yes, sir?"

"If I catch you even saying so much Hawaiian as 'aloha,' you're fired. Twenty a week okay?"

"Ample, sir, I wish to see the world. And I do not know much Hawaiian, sir."

"Attaboy," Mac said, and went back to sleep.

BY the time they had been in Manila twelve hours, Dave McNally was wondering what he had done all these years without Tom. The boy had found him a three-room suite in a private house; had already hired a seaworthy ketch and an old Filipino to stand watches; and was now buying

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

provisions at about two-thirds the price Mac would have had to pay.

"I must have gone to Sunday school or something when I was a boy," McNally decided. "Now I'm reaping the rewards of a well-spent life." He was dressing in the bedroom of his suite for a call on the editor of one of the local papers. He finished shaving, and, in his shorts, opened the bureau to get out white linens; looking over his shoulder, he saw that Tom had laid out a suit, socks and dark blue silk shirt, with a white tie. McNally's shoes, freshly whitened, sat primly under the edge of the bed.

The showman grinned, and dressed. There must be some awful catch to this Tom Panaki. His brother, while a good sailor, and a nice shot with a rifle, had not been outstanding; McNally had only remembered him because of a special brand of spaghetti sauce he had made one night.

Boy, he thought as he descended to the street and whistled up a two-wheeled pony-taxi—boy, a man was a fool to take those Arctic jobs on. The South Seas for him, every time.

The newspaper editor said, yes, he remembered the piece about the island. Their waterfront man had written it, he'd be in pretty soon. While he was waiting, would Mr. McNally pose for a picture? Distinguished explorer visits Manila, that sort of thing. So Mr. McNally was going to try and find the island mentioned in the story?

"Yeah," Mac drawled. "Make a good side-show attraction. 'The Island Where Time Stood Still.' Might even sell it to a museum; I've got nothing against pure science except the prices it pays."

"That island may not be there," the editor said. "you know these sailor yarns. We really only ran the story to fill space on a Monday; we were quite surprised when the wire services gave it such a play."

Mac said: "This sailor brought back some kind of animal, didn't he?"

The editor laughed. "A rat, I believe — but here's Carran, now, our waterfront man. He can tell you more about it than I can."

Carran said: "Sure, if you want to meet the sailor. That's easy. This foundation bought his rat from him for five hundred bucks, and he used it to make a down payment on a saloon. Come on with me."

The saloon was named The Biologic Foundation Bar and Grill, in honor of the source of its proprietor's money. This man turned out to be one Pinky Tobias, ex-sailor, copra trader, and general roustabout. He was a little under the weather when Dave arrived.

"Yes, sir, yes, sir—that is quite a place, indeed. Elephant tracks all over the place, and monkeys what could talk like politicians. Parrots with tail feathers that hung on the ground and—"

The reporter looked at Mac, and shrugged. "You're pretty high for this time of day, aren't you, Pinky?"

Pinky blinked. "Who, me? Naw. Well—I had a couple. There was a Kanaka boy in here, eddicated fella, askin' all about the island. 'N, he was so polite, I didn't want to show no race prejudice by refusin' ta drink with him."

"By the name of Tom Panaki?"

"Tom somethin' 'r other."

Mac said, "I might have known. Let me buy you gentlemen a couple of drinks, and then I'll be on my way."

HE stopped off at the Japanese consulate on his way home, and then at the office of the company that owned

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the cultivated pearl fisheries. The consulate willingly enough stamped his passport good for visiting the pearl islands and the little Ph.D. at the pearl company said, yes, they could trust Mr. McNally not to steal any of their oysters, but he would have to agree not to talk business to any of the divers who had not served their terms.

"Terms?" Mac asked. "You mean apprenticeship?"

"Precisely, sir," the Japanese said, bowing. "They come to us, you know, when they are nine; we pay their parents a small sum. Then they live on the island, being trained to swim and dive and nurse oysters, until they are fifteen, when they become divers. For the next three years they dive, and then they are released, with a good sum of money for their three years' work. It is a nice arrangement, sir; with the money they are usually the best-dowered girls in their villages."

"Hmm, I see. I suppose the boys are crazy to marry them."

The Japanese giggled. "Not so very as you might suppose, sir. The work is difficult, the life very, very healthy; our girls are a bit on the muscular side."

Mac said: "Even if I didn't need them for an attraction, I'm going to make a point of visiting those islands. Your girls are something no man should miss."

"You will find them very, very interesting, sir."

Mac went back to his rooms and found Tom working on his sea-going clothes. "Well," McNally said, "I went around to the Biologic Bar and Grill, only you'd beat me to it. How about this island?"

"Frankly, Mr. McNally, I believe it's all a lot of tommyrot. Bushwa, as we used to say in high school. This man found a deformed rat, and he has just enough native cunning to build it up into something."

"Was it a rat?"

"It would look like one," said the ex-Eagle Scout. "Actually, it was what is known as a marmosa, a species of—roughly—marsupial rodent. That is, they carry their young in a pouch, as do kangaroos, and opossums. This particular one had some deformity of her mammary system, so that she appeared to sweat milk, as does the duck-billed platypus of Australia."

"Well, people aren't likely to pay much to look at a rat, milk sweating or otherwise. The elephants and parrots and so on are phony, Tom?"

Tom looked up from mending the rope sole of one of McNally's sea-shoes. "Sit," he said. "By tonight, Pinky will see parrots and elephants in his barroom."

McNally grinned. "Well, I don't know. We might look for cannibals in the Poly—"

"Sir," Tom said, "we might as well try and find this island. I have the position, and it is not far from the cultured pearl preserve; a day's sail."

McNally looked at his helper a little more closely. "You've been looking into those, too, eh?"

The boy met his eyes.

"Sir, since I was a small boy, I have heard about the islands where the girls tend the pearl oysters. My grandfather—he was Japanese—once visited there, and he said it was like eating lotus, sir, if you will pardon an expression from the classics."

McNally frowned. "Kid, don't get smarter than the boss. It makes me uneasy . . . We sail high tide tonight, then. Tell your crew to be aboard."

"Yes, Mr. McNally." The boy put the shoe down carefully.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

II

THE crew—his name was Cecil—stood by to fend them off from the pier. Tom had the wheel, and so McNally had appointed himself bow lookout. He could sail well enough himself, but he preferred letting the Hawaiian take them out of Manila harbor.

Their course was southeast, and the Southern Cross lay on the horizon, a group of bright stars widely spaced, no more striking, no more spectacular, than any other stars, but still romantic because of association.

"The Russian gypped us when they sold us Alaska for six million dollars," Dave McNally said. "Or was it a jug of whisky? Anyway, they gypped us, gold and sealskins to the contrary notwithstanding. Hey, Tom!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Let's save our money and buy Alaska to give back to the Russians."

"Yes, sir! You feel good, huh?"

"I feel like a kid let out of school. Let go the jib halliards, let go the jib halliards, my finger is caught in the block," Mac sang. They rounded the spit that almost landlocked the harbor, and hit the long, smooth swells of the Pacific.

The ocean fought to drag them back to shore, and then, as they hit what the surf-riders call *zeor* in Hawaii, fought to take them out again, away from land. A seagull flew cawing over Mac's head, fluttered down near Tom, and then settled in the rigging. The Filipino took over the bow watch, and Mac went to sit on the grating near Tom.

He was silent for a while. "Tom," he said, finally, "I've got the feeling this is going to be the first unsuccessful McNally trip. I'm having too much fun to make money."

"If they pay money for swimming, diving, you'll show a profit on those girls, sir."

"Still got your mind on them, eh?" McNally looked upon the snub-nosed profile of his boy, standing against the wheel. "You make it sound like white-slavery, Tom."

"Oh, no, sir. Those are good girls, Mr. McNally. They never even see a man till they go home."

Mac whistled. "Tom, sometimes I wonder about what goes on in your mind," he said, "and sometimes I don't wonder, because I'm afraid I'm right. . . . According to our maps, we put in at a trading port in a couple of days."

"Morning after tomorrow, sir. A French port. Then we skip back to touch at the Moro country. That's pretty wild, sir. We'd better keep the rifles under the hatch."

"I was there ten years ago, when your brother sailed with me. I had quite a crew in those days; I was new to the business, thought I ought to ship a schooner crew. This way, Tom, if we don't get anything, we won't be out much. I would have had to take a vacation anyway, after landing in Frisco from that Aleutian joint . . ." Mac rolled over on his elbow, and watched the profile of his mate. "Think I'll skip the pearl islands. That business sounds a little more like work than I care for."

The profile jerked. "You would make a grave mistake, Mr. McNally."

"Yeah, I guess so. Well, let it go. There won't be anything at that French port, but we might pick up a few animals at the Moro joint. Say, Tommy, who's going to do the cooking, you or Cecil?"

"I will, sir. I'm a very good cook; our father, you know, has a restaurant."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"God's gift to the homeless wanderer, that's what you are, Tom. I'll take the wheel, go below and dish me up some spaghetti, kid. I've got a little bet with myself."

HE stood up at the binnacle, feeling good, liking the roll of the ketch under his feet, the sight of the stars over his head, the feel of the wheel in his hands. Tom came back in twenty minutes with a bowl of something that made the gray-haired Filipino in the bow jump. "Here it is, sir."

His nostrils twitching, Mac accepted the bowl and a fork and spoon from Tom, and sat crosslegged on the grating, eating. He had been right; this was even better spaghetti than the older brother had cooked. "Tom, remember to tell me to put you in my will. . . . You leave some for Cecil?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I'll relieve him before he jumps out of his skin from the smell."

That night he slept as he hadn't in years; everything was so smooth, so nice. He knew he was riding for a fall, but it didn't matter. In the amusement-procuring trade, you took them as they came. He awoke and ate canned herring-roe and scrambled eggs and golden toast and coffee for breakfast.

"In a family like yours, Tom, I don't see why you aren't all millionaires."

"My father is, sir. Frank and Larry are still young."

"Ugh! My mistake." He moved up on the bench and went to sleep; awoke to take a short watch while each of his men ate, then went back to sleep again; ate a marvelous dinner that started off with tinned turtle soup, and turned in early. Now that they were well out from shore, they didn't bother with a new watch.

Tom woke him in the morning. "We are lying outside the harbor, Mr. McNally, waiting for the tide."

Mac rolled out, shaved, ate, and went up to take charge. But it wasn't necessary; when the tide rose, Tom took her through the opening in the coral reef, and old Cecil tied up neatly enough to a buoy.

A motor launch had already put out from shore. Mac tried to remember the name of the French administrator in this port from ten years ago; but when the launch came near, its tricolor flapping in the breeze, he saw this Frenchman was too young to have been here so long.

The administrator swung aboard, said: "American? I am Monsieur Daugnard, adminstrateur, this is Dr. Noyes, our medical officer." Noyes was a halfbreed.

"Gentlemen!" Mac shook hands, introduced himself. "I'm chartering this ship, the crew there—Cecil—owns it."

"The Filipino?"

Mac nodded. "The other boy is working directly for me. He's down on the papers as mate."

"No disease?" Noyes asked.

Mac shook his head. "No, but we'd better prevent any. You gentlemen care for a spot of whisky?"

"But of course," the administrator said. "Why else would he come out?"

Laughing they went below. Tom was ahead of them, with the siphon and the bottle and three shining glasses set out on the table. Mac poured, and then, for some reason or other, said: "Get yourself a glass, Tom, and have one with us."

"Yes, sir." The boy reached behind the cupboard door.

Mac caught a look at Noyes' face, and cursed himself for a fool. No halfbreed likes to be invited to drink with

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a native. Tom had already poured himself a small drink; he lifted it, saying: "Your health, gentlemen," and went on deck.

IN the silence that followed, Daugnard sipped, the other two men avoided each other's eyes. Finally, Daugnard said: "We had a favor to ask you, Mr. McNally."

"Anything," Mac said.

"Two of your compatriots are stranded on an island about forty miles from here. We don't happen to have a boat and a crew able to make the voyage just now. I wonder—you have an extra cabin, haven't you?"

"Yes, but I'm on a long voyage. Two or three weeks. These people may not care for that sort of thing."

"Well," Noyes cut in, "it isn't an emergency. The trading schooner'll get 'em next month."

"Not an emergency of the body, but of the nerves," Daugnard said. "These Americans were making a pleasure trip through the islands. Their boat hit a reef, sand. They sent us a message by a native canoe, but I do not blame them for not wishing to put to sea in one; anyway, they probably couldn't handle it. And I think you would find them amusing, Mr. McNally."

Mac was in a good-natured mood. "All right. There's plenty of room on the ketch. I'll get the chart, and you can show me where they are."

"I'll come with you," Daugnard said. Together they walked up to the tiny chart house behind the wheel. Tom and Cecil were busy furling the sails.

Daugnard and Mac bent their heads over the map; it took the Frenchman about five minutes to find the position. He marked it on the map, finally, and then straightened up. "You have been in America lately?"

McNally nodded. "About two weeks ago. Why?"

"You are lucky. To see the land of your birth, that is happiness. Me, I have not been home in three years; I must serve two more here. And with no company but that Noyes."

McNally kept a noncommittal silence.

"To me," Daugnard said, "a little dark blood—it is nothing. Do I worry about that? No. But Noyes thinks I do. He thinks all the time that I consider myself better than he because he is a halfbreed. That is not the reason I do not like him. And—"

There was a yell on deck, running feet. They turned, went forward to where Noyes, wavering a little on his feet, was facing Tom Panaki. The doctor's hand was a flail, slashing at Tom's face.

The Kanaka boy was standing perfectly still, a polishing rag in one hand. His skin was so dark that no flush or paleness showed and McNally couldn't tell whether the boy was coldly angry or hotly resentful. He would have preferred the latter.

Mac ran forward, caught the doctor's arm, swung him around. "What the hell do you think you're doing?"

"This fellow didn't move aside when I came along. Teach him a lesson," Noyes said. "He's not in Hawaii now; out here, natives jump when a white man goes by."

Tom said to McNally: "Sir, I—"

"I know, Tom. Go aft, boy."

Daugnard went below, came up with the whisky bottle; it was empty. The administrator held it aloft a moment, then tossed it overboard. "I am sorry, Mr. McNally."

"Okay," Mac said. "Just get him off my boat."

Daugnard bowed. "You'll need to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

replenish your water. If you will tie up at the pier, I will send a tank down. And I would be honored if you would dine with me."

"So you're not going to punish that boy, eh?" Noyes asked, thickly. "Don't think I'm good—"

"Come along, Noyes," Daugnard said, wearily. "We must go ashore."

He half pulled, half dragged the doctor overside into the launch.

McNally watched them beating back to shore. Then he called: "Tom?"

THE boy was at his shoulder instantly. "Start up the auxiliary, and run into the pier. We might as well get some water. High tide's tonight at ten—so the administrator tells me. We'll have to lay over till then. I don't want you going ashore. Understand?"

Something was choking the Kanaka's throat. "Yes—sir."

Suddenly McNally swore, swore long and hard, with long involved expressions that he hardly believed he knew. He caught himself, stopped, put his hand on Tom's shoulder. "Boy, I wouldn't have had this happen for the world. But it has happened, and that halfbreed medico can make trouble for us. So let it go, boy."

Tom's face was smooth. "Yes, Mr. McNally. You can trust me. It is nothing."

"Okay, boy." Mac guided the boat to the wharf while Tom ran the auxiliary. Then he tried to rest on the deck, but it was too hot in the harbor. Palms on the atoll nearly cut all breeze off from the sea. McNally pulled on a fresh white coat over his bare chest and dirty ducks, and went ashore.

The street rose in a hill from the wharf and he paused at the top to look back. Tom Panaki was working around the deck, opening the water tanks. The casks of fresh water came up the other side of the hill to McNally, pulled by a crew of French-chattering natives. Dave went on. He had a vermouth cassis—warm—in a bar, and turned over some stale French and American magazines, and talked awhile to a gendarme who had once served in Africa—he was an Indo-Chinese—then turned back to the waterfront as night began to fall. The street was quiet.

Tom Panaki was sitting on the forecastle hatch, chatting to two native girls who lounged against the bulkhead of the pier. He jumped up as McNally appeared.

"As you were," Mac called, chuckling. "You're seeing the world, Tommy."

Tom Panaki smiled, his white teeth flashing through the gloom, and then went on chatting to the girls in high-school French.

In his cabin, Mac found fresh whites and clean shoes and linen laid out for him. Tom must have overheard the administrator's invitation to dinner. He started to dress, then stopped, staring in the mirror. . . . Tom had been polishing brass when he and the Frenchman had talked in the chart house.

McNally was still frowning as he went above again. "Ask your friends aboard for dinner, Tom," he called. "You can break out a bottle of wine if you want to, but don't give them any hard liquor." He wanted the boy to forget the insult of the afternoon, wanted to show him that he, McNally, appreciated Tom's education and worth. Then he forgot all about the incident as he went up the hill, through a street become glamorous with lamplight and humming voices from the native huts, passed the same bar he had been in that afternoon, and almost

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turned in, because it looked so inviting by palm-oil light.

But Noyes was sitting in the bar drinking, and McNally didn't want to see Noyes. He walked on, to the administration building, where the tricolor of France had just been lowered for nightfall. The Frenchman gave him a very poor Martini, and they began dinner.

They were up to the fish of a formal French meal when one of Daugnard's servants clattered outside. Voices were raised, and then Noyes appeared in the doorway that led out to the court. "Sneaking off to have dinner by yourselves?" he asked unpleasantly. "Isn't the medical officer of this—"

He never got to finish his title. His knees folded under him, and his hand let go of the door frame, and he started to fall. McNally had a queer thought—he remembered a drunk like that falling in Australia once, in a dance hall, and a woman had come and picked his pockets while sheepmen and bushrats stepped over the body without looking. Must remember to tell that to—

His train of thought stopped abruptly and he stared. Drinking does not put a knife between a man's shoulder blades. Drinking does not cause red blood to trickle down a white-coated spine, hiding the spots on a linen coat.

McNALLY sprang over the body and into the court. Coming out of the light, he couldn't see very much; all he saw was a native figure—that is, a dark figure, naked to the waist—darting into the street. He shouted, "Hey, police," and ran after it.

In the archway, he got another glimpse; the native had a red hibiscus in his hair. Then the man disappeared between two buildings, and McNally, running in pursuit, collided with his friend, the Indo-Chinese cop, and they both fell down, and after that there was not much use chasing the man.

McNally went back into the courtyard, back to the door to the dining room. Daugnard had straightened up. "Dead," he said, without expression. "Let us go down to your boat, McNally."

Dave McNally said: "I know what you're thinking, but it isn't so. Tom isn't a killer."

"Of course. We shall not ask you to take any part in prosecuting him. He is your employee, your friend."

"Let's go," Mac said, between his teeth.

They marched down to the boat, still tied up at the wharf. Music drifted from it as they came up; a girl was singing. "I told Tom he could entertain at a little dinner party," McNally said, without smiling. "It's still going on, I guess."

Their feet clattered on the deck, and when they went into the forecastle, the natives were still. Cecil still held a stringed instrument in his hand; one of the girls had her lips parted, as though she had stopped in the middle of a song. Tom and the other girl were lounging on a locker, their shoulders touching. Tom stood up when they came in.

He was, perhaps, breathing a little hard, but then he had been singing. He said: "Sir?"

"Noyes has been killed," McNally said quickly.

Daugnard cut him short with a movement of his right hand. "You have been on this boat all evening?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. McNally ordered me to stay aboard."

The two girls chattered corrobora-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion in their battered French. Cecil said: "Yes, sar. Tom, he never stir foot all night."

"These damn' natives always stick together," Daugnard said, peevishly. "Where's your knife, boy?"

"I don't own one, *m'sieu,*" Tom said. "There's knives on the boat. You want me to fetch—"

"Peculiar that a sailor would not carry a knife," Daugnard said.

"He's not a sailor, he's just out of high school," McNally said, irritably.

Daugnard said: "There is not a choice. I did not like Noyes, but I am administrator. Arrest him."

The Indo-Chinese moved forward, grabbed Tom's wrist. One of the girls began to cry.

The gendarme tugged, and Tom was taken ashore. Daugnard followed without saying goodbye to McNally. The American lit a cigarette, frowned at it without knowing he did, and then said, abruptly, "Stop crying, girl. Do you know where the jail is?"

She stopped, her eyes bright with unshed tears. She nodded.

"It'll be bamboo and mud," McNally said. "All right. Wait a half an hour, and take me there. The boy's a friend of mine." He had, in his life, done worse things, more foolish ones, but never with so little reason.

III

THE town had very few alleys; it was so small that all the houses were on one street. But behind the east row of houses there was a stream, and behind the west row there was a desolate waste of refuse dumps. Mac chose the garbage dumps first, and he and the girl went prowling up them, bent double to escape the bright moonlight.

But dogs came and whined and snapped at their heels, and finally, when one of them pursued them persistently, baying and howling, McNally whispered: "We better cross over."

"Tant mieux," the girl whispered back, nodding. They went between two palm-and-mud huts, put so close together that they could, at one time, hear a man snoring in one hut and a woman softly humming to a fretful baby in the other.

The street was deserted. As they hurried across it, Mac stole a glance up the hill at the town's one light; there was a policeman there, his white shorts and khaki shirt and solar topee plainly outlined. It was not the Indo-Chinese he had talked to that day; and Mac began to fidget a little. If the colonial was guarding the jail, this business would run into trouble—serious trouble.

Sneaking for the stream, he looked at his wrist watch. It was twenty minutes of ten; just right, exactly right to make high tide and get away. There was no boat to pursue them; the administrator had said as much when he asked them to make the rescue trip.

The girl slid her little hand into Mac's and squeezed. He stopped, put his ear close to her lips.

"C'est voila," she whispered. Her free hand pointed at a house set off on a curve, ahead of them. It was little more than a closet, placed behind another boxlike building; probably the police station.

He marshaled his French, asked the girl whether there would be a guard. She said she didn't know; the gendarmes slept in the front building.

Mac groaned, but he had come this far; he might as well go ahead with it. He had brought a marlin-spike and a heavy knife from the ship.

He had to splash uphill through the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stream. As much as possible, he avoided lifting his feet; this was old stuff, he had tracked enough wild animals in his time.

Then, dragging himself out of the stream, flat on his belly so the water from his clothes would not splash on the ground, he made it to the jail wall.

The girl was unconcernedly wringing out her skirt.

As soon as he touched the wall, he knew he could get through. He attacked with the marlin-spike, digging hard, throwing his shoulders into it; he wasn't making much more noise than a rat.

From a barred window, Tom said: "Sir, pass me the knife, I shall dig from inside."

Mac grunted. There was no excitement in Tom's voice, none in the girl's bearing. It seemed as though, he, McNally, was the only one who felt fear; and he was supposed to be the leader.

The marlin-spike bit into the wall. Once McNally stopped, his heart rising, cold, into his throat; the off-duty cop had turned over on his cot in the station, was muttering something in his sleep. But the knife inside the jail did not stop grinding.

How did Tom know that McNally would bring an extra knife? How did Tom know a lot of the things he seemed to know? There was something damned odd about Tom. McNally, his wrist and forearm aching from effort, sank back on his haunches. It occurred to him that it might be a good idea to sneak away the way he had come, and leave the Kanaka in there.

"Sir, hurry," Tom said. "The tide will be best in ten minutes."

McNALLY grunted and dug away again at the mud mortar. Three minutes later Tom said: "All right, sir. The block that has the bars imbedded in it is loose; I can push it out. Sir, you had better start for the boat."

"Okay, Tommy." McNally shoved the marlin-spike in his belt, made tracks for the stream. He had slid into it, was started down hill when there was a crash behind him; a soft crash.

He didn't stop. He had given Tom the break; let him do the rest. But no rifle fire split the night; the Indo-Chinese must be a heavy sleeper.

A figure caught up to him in the stream, wading along with ease. Tom reached over and took the marlin-spike from McNally and, without the weight, the American went faster.

Where the stream fanned out into the harbor they waded ashore, hurried down the sand to the pier. Cecil was waiting for them. McNally hurried aboard, feeling tired, a little frightened, now that it was all over.

Tom was saying goodbye to the girl who had helped them make the jail break. Then the Kanaka stepped aboard, throwing the hawser off the bitts as he came. "Sir, I can take her out without the auxiliary," he said, and threw some Spanish words at Cecil.

The ketch slid out into the harbor on the power of her foremast. The tide had reached its peak, was going out again, and that helped them. They floated over the reef without trouble, and Tom handed the wheel to McNally while he went to run up the mains'l.

Looking back, McNally could see the small figure of the girl—on the pier. She was waving.

Tom secured the mainsail, came back to the wheel. "Sir, we are free. I thank you." Then he said, "Sir, that girl wanted to sail with us. I had a little trouble with her."

"Tom," McNally said, "You're a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cold bird. But don't get too big for your wing spread. . . . Tom, I suppose an Eagle Scout like you knows all about radio code. Run that receiving set off the batteries, and stand by to get any messages about chasing us. I don't want any French destroyers putting wheels over our bows."

"Sir, very good. But, sir, I do not think there will be pursuit. Monsieur Daugnard wanted me to get away."

"How do you know, Tom?"

"Sir, I just know."

"You just know too much," McNally grunted, and went below to get out of his wet clothes and into his bunk.

He slept, though he hadn't thought he would. He slept till the smell of breakfast woke him up. He went up on deck in his pajamas. It was a fine clear day, but aft there was a smudge on the horizon that diminished while he watched.

Tom brought him breakfast, followed his eyes. "Sir, that was lucky for us, that was a hurricane. But it missed us, sir. However, I am afraid it has already grounded the trading schooner."

"Eh?"

"The radio, sir. Also, there will be no pursuit. Daugnard sent a message to Tahiti concerning the incident, and said that he could not identify the boat, as Noyes was port officer, and had kept no record of the ketch. So you see, sir, we are all right. Daugnard wanted us to escape. I think, too, sir, we shall have to take the American ladies with us to the pearl islands; they had better not return to French territory."

Dave said: "What? American ladies?"

"Yes, sir, the ones that you promised Monsieur Daugnard to rescue. With the trading schooner laid up, they would be there for months. It's no place for women."

"Oh, yeah. . . . But, Tommy, Daugnard didn't say they were *women*."

"I heard it back there in—" Tom broke off.

"So you were ashore. You killed Noyes, didn't you, Tom?"

"Sir, those girls were very talkative." Tom was trying to get the subject changed. "The younger American lady—she was engaged to Noyes. Met him in San Francisco, sir, when he was on his vacation, thought he was just sunburned, I guess, sir. Then when she got out, she found out the difference, and—"

"The inquiring reporter, eh, Tom?" McNally looked up at his mate. "Kid, I am captain on this boat. And I am a long-suffering man, but— Watch it, Tom. I'm tough when I'm mad. All right, what time do we pick up these women?"

"About eight bells, sir. I shall attend to everything."

"No," McNally decided. "No, Tom. I've gotten you out of one jail. From now on, my friend, you stand by, and take orders. I shall attend to everything."

"Sir, yes."

IV

THERE had never been an expedition quite like this before, McNally told himself. This rambling around, getting Kanaka mates out of jail, picking up stranded women, tacking back and forth—he was McNally. And McNally usually went in and drove hard for his destination, his objective, got his prize and went home. Well, sometimes he had to take second prize but this—this conducting a tour

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the South Seas for an employee's benefit was childish.

His object was to go take a look at his problematical island, and then either load up the ketch with an exhibit or make the easy leg to the Japanese culture pearl beds and take up six Jap girls for a swimming team.

But all these other things seemed to be proper at the time. Maybe they would all come out in a plan, maybe there was some rhyme or reason to them. Yeah, maybe.

But at a little before eight bells, when they made their landfall, he went below and changed into clean ducks.

And he took up the master's position beside the wheel because, in his heart, he knew a man looked impressive there. Cecil handled the wheel and Tom reefed sails. They switched on the auxiliary and went into the harbor smartly.

There was no administration here; no port authority to keep them from tying up to the dock. And there was no dock. So they dropped anchor well out, and Cecil let over the dinghy under Tom's directions. Then Tom rowed McNally to shore.

There was nothing but natives in sight.

McNally caught one of them up, asked him in Lingua Franca about white women. The man grinned, said: "I take. You givem cigarette?"

McNally handed him a cigarette, called to Tom: "I'm going inland, Mr. Panaki. Watch the landing."

Tom saluted from among a knot of admiring native girls. The boy had a way with women.

McNally strolled up the coral shore, towards a group of huts. He was about ten feet from the one his guide indicated when a female voice called: "If you come any farther, I'll shoot."

McNally said: "Hey. This is a friend, come to rescue you, sister." He did not feel as jaunty as he looked.

A brown-haired head stuck out of the door of the hut, and the girl said: "Are you—are you an American?"

"Yeah. Mind if I come in? Emily Post says—"

The girl came out. "What are you doing here? I didn't know any steamers ever—"

"I've got a ketch in the harbor. Daugnard sent me to rescue you." McNally coughed. "He said there were two—"

"My aunt left. She hired a war-canoe to take her to—"

Something crawled up McNally's spine. "There's an old nautical saying," he grunted. "One woman on a ship, or one priest. You haven't got a priest?"

"What?" This was a pretty girl, all right. It would be. But there was a small, tight look around her eyes that he didn't like.

"Let it go. If you'll pack your pretties, I'll send my mate up to get them."

"How do you know I'm going with you?"

"Sister, it is nothing to me. But—as the French say—nothing. Only—if you just want the luxury of debating awhile, you're going to be out of luck. We came in just below high tide, according to my books, and we go out just after it. If we stay any longer, my first mate kills people. He calls it landsickness."

"Are you making any sense at all, Mr.—"

"McNally's the name. And I don't know if—"

Dave McNally reeled over, went down. As some nice, tropical blackness cut off his sight, it occurred to him that white men don't go wading in tropical streams after dark without

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chewing hopefully on a lot of quinine.

"There's no dusk in the tropics," he said, from the ground.

WHEN he came to, he was on the ketch, and they were out to sea. His ears rang like a carrillon; he turned over in his bunk, groaning. A hand put a cold towel on his forehead, said: "Drink this."

The stuff was cold beef bouillon, mixed with evaporated milk. He drank it, felt strong enough to sit up. The girl shoved a pillow under his shoulders.

"Boy," McNally said. "That was a bad one. Fever."

"Yes, I know. Mr. Panaki tells me you are just down from the Arctic, too."

"Yeah. I've had fever before, and it backs up on you. Hey, thanks for taking care of me. I'd better get on deck and set a course."

He tried to sit up.

"Mr. Panaki said to make you rest if I had to—had to sit on you. He's very devoted to you. . . . By the way, thank you for rescuing me. I was getting very sick of that island. Mr. Pa—"

McNally said: "Call him Tom. My name is Dave McNally. We're informal on this ketch."

"Oh. My name's Lucia. Lucia Bradford."

"Nice name," McNally said. "All right, Lucia. Come on and sit on me. I'm going up on deck and find out where we're going. Tom Panaki has ideas occasionally."

"He's very well educated," Lucia said, putting a hand on Mac's head and pushing him down. "I shall write an article about him for the Normal School Review. My aunt and I were making a tour of the South Seas to study educational conditions here. We ran into—"

Mac whistled. "All right, girl," he said, "anything you say." He took her hand from his forehead, and swung out of the berth.

She grabbed his arm, pulled herself close to him in the cabin. "Don't you believe me?"

"What difference does it make?" he asked. "I'll drop you off within a couple of days and—"

She said: "All right. You met Dr. Noyes back at—"

He said, heavily: "I know the story. You were engaged to him, and didn't know he was a—"

She said: "Yes."

He did not look at her.

"You know Noyes is dead?"

"Mr. Panaki told me. He was killed in a drunken fight, he said. Mr. Panaki said—"

"Mr. Panaki is too damned smart," Dave McNally growled, and swung away from the girl. He slammed the cabin door behind him, tore up on deck.

Cecil was at the wheel, his wizened little face intent on the compass. Tom Panaki was working around, whistling. He saw Mac, and carefully lashed the rope he had been trimming before hurrying over.

"Sir, you should be below. Fever, sir, is—"

"Is over," Mac said. He did feel rocky, but he made it to the wheel. He leaned over the chart table. He swore.

"Hey, Tom! Who laid this course, you? You've passed up my island altogether. How long was I out of my head?"

"Two days, sir. Miss Lucia has been devoted, she has nursed you every moment."

"Nuts with Miss Lucia," McNally snapped. "We're nearly onto the pearl

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bed islands. Whose idea was that, yours?"

"Sir, yes. With you incapacitated, I deemed it best to beat for the port where your trip was sure to become a financial success, instead of loitering in the roadway off a problematical island which might net you nothing of a commercial nature."

"You're taking too much on yourself," McNally said. He braced himself against the charthouse wall, digging his bare heels into the holes in the grating to keep himself upright. "I'm in command here, I am the charterer of this ship, and I am your boss."

He wondered whether he had strength enough to take the Kanaka if it came to a fight, and rather doubted it. Tom's smooth skin covered an awful lot of muscle, and anyway, the boy had probably taken a Merit Badge in jiujitsu.

BUT McNally reached behind him and got hold of the heavy metal ruler they used to chart the courses. He'd get in a couple of whacks, anyway. His speculative eye took in the wiry little Filipino's back. Cecil might jump either way, but probably he would jump for McNally's throat.

But it didn't come to a fight. Tears welled into Tom Panaki's velvet eyes. "Sir, if you do not trust me, make Cecil mate and I shall serve as deckhand. Mr. McNally, I am heartbroken."

"All right, all right. But I want to make it to that island. We'll change the course and—"

"Sir," Tom Panaki said, "that would be a grievous waste of time. Look, sir—if I may be permitted—let me show you on the chart. I do not intend to presume but—"

"Out with it, man, out with it." But McNally knew he was licked. He turned, rolling his shoulders along the charthouse wall to keep from standing upright.

Tom Panaki eagerly brought the chart over for McNally to see. "Sir, our course homeward could cut right past the island without a moment's waste of time. You see—"

"Yeah," McNally said bitterly. "But if I've got a shipload of Japanese swimming girls on board, where am I going to carry any exhibits I get on the island? That's why I wanted to play for the big show first."

"Oh, sir, I am sorry, but I feared that you would wish to shorten the trip because of your illness, and I wished to insure you against loss. Oh, I have been presumptuous; my father and my brother Larry frequently have chided me for it."

"Ah, nuts," McNally said. His head was still ringing, and the motion of the boat made him sick. "From now on, boy, if there are any decisions to make, I make them, if you have to douse me over the side to bring me to. I've fought," McNally said, "in every latitude and longitude on this earth. From Hey Rubes in Iowa to bandits in the Caucasus, from cannibals in Borneo to headhunters in Africa. I've been in eight revolutions," Dave McNally shouted, and his head went around and his knees buckled, "three wars, five race riots, and so many fights that I'm scar tissue from the Achilles tendon on my right heel to the mastoid bone on my left ear. I—"

The girl's head appeared from below, and she got one arm while Tom got the other, and he could feel the soles of his feet bumping against the treads as they took him below. His bed was very soft, for a moment, and then the chill that followed the fever

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

caught him in its grip, and ice made his eyes ache and his belly collapse, and he was dimly conscious of blankets and more blankets, and Lucia and Tom behind over him with hot tea and strong bouillon.

V

THIS was a polite voice, but it hissed. So it was not Tom, nor was it Lucia. The voice said: "This will make you better in a half an hour, sir," and then hissed some more.

A needle pricked his arm. He said: "Thanks, Doctor," and lay very still, and gradually the ringing went away, and he could sit up and be surprised that the doctor was a woman: a muscular little Japanese woman of about fifty years.

"That has been one of the worst bouts of fever I have ever seen, Captain McNally," the doctor said. "Your mate informs me that you have been in the Arctic, following fever in Asia?"

"Yes, Doctor."

"Well, it will be safe for you to land. I should take it easy a few days."

"You speak very good English, Doctor."

"I was educated at Vassar and the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia University," the doctor said.

"Congratulations." Mac started to get out of the bunk, and then realized that he was not dressed. "I should like to dress," he said. "And you're sure it's all right for me to land? I don't want to start an epidemic on your island."

"Oh, thank you very much, Captain, but this disease is spread only by mosquitoes, of which we have none. You, sir, were bitten years ago, and the virus remains in your blood."

"It seems to be getting worse, though," Mac said. "I can't remember a bout like this before."

"You must take better care of yourself. I shall see you ashore, then." The doctor paused in the doorway. "You are not, by any chance, a Columbia man, Captain?"

"Sorry, I never went to college."

"So sorry," the Japanese woman said, and went above.

When McNally came on deck, Lucia, dressed in faded blue shorts and a faded blue denim sailor blouse, was perched on the edge of the dock. Cecil was standing anchor guard. "How do you feel, sailor?" the girl asked.

"Okay. Thanks for all the care I got."

She walked over, took his arm. "You made wild and passionate love to me during one phase of it," she said, smiling. "Tom was quite embarrassed. Unfortunately, you didn't use my right name, even once. I'm afraid you've got a past, Dave."

"Yeah, probably." He jumped ashore. "I've got a vague idea that I've been pushed around a good deal," he said. "Whatever it was that doctor gave me has fixed me up again, and I've a couple of accounts to settle with Mr. Thomas Panaki. From being a vague notion of how to insure my trip, this pearl culture business has become the main objective. I gather that's where we are."

She nodded. "That's right. Dr. Tangi said to bring you to her house for cocktails. Afterwards, we're going to see the girls dive, and then you can talk business with the manager tonight."

"That's as good a reason as any for not doing any of those things," McNally said. "I've done too many things in the last few days that I didn't intend to. It's about time I got the reins back in my own hands. Where's Tom?"

"The manager loaned him a hand-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cart and a tank to get water for the ketch. There isn't a hose line down to the dock."

McNally grunted. He couldn't complain about that. The mate's duty was to get water as soon as they landed, in case the captain wanted to sail immediately. But he was going to have a showdown with Mr. Panaki, and that soon. He and the girl strolled inland.

LUCIA said: "You must think I'm an awful fool. Falling for Dr. Noyes. But he had glamour and a sort of charm, and I was a school teacher, with nothing to look forward to but more school teaching, and I didn't know he was a—" She paused, blushed.

"Look," Mac said, "don't get British, just because you've been living where they wear sun helmets. I've got nothing against Noyes for being half-Polynesian, and there's nothing wrong with him. No, it wasn't that, it was that he was such a drunken, dull sort of—"

"But he behaved in San Francisco."

"Yeah, I suppose so. Say, this is quite a place."

It was. Superimposed on the South Seas luxury of plants and trees, coconuts and flowers was a Japanese neatness, a care that emphasized the lushness of the place. Each path was carefully marked, weedless and spotless, each flower had a cup cut in the earth around it—but the flowers were ten times the size of any Japanese bloom. Ahead of them, two girls in middy-blouses and voluminous bloomers were sweeping a path, three others were building a rock-and-cement bridge across a little stream.

"Lovely," Lucia said.

There was a rumbling noise, and Tom came around the bend in the path, preceding a water cart drawn by a half dozen giggling girls in the same strangely American costume. Tom himself was not lending a hand; this was the island where women did the work.

Tom saluted McNally. "Sir, I am a great success here."

"You always will be," McNally said, sourly. "Get that water aboard, and stand by the boat."

The boy did not look crestfallen. "Sir, as you say. But, I have been invited to cocktails at Madame, the Doctor's."

"You're coming up in the social scale, Tom. But I'll make your apologies for you."

"Sir, if I may presume, it would not be wise. The Japanese are very touchy as to color prejudice in the East; Madame might misconstrue your motives in not having me attend—"

McNally barked: "You work for me. Do as I say!"

Tom saluted. "Aye, aye, sir." He went down the path with his girls.

"But he was right," Lucia said. "If you hurt the Japanese's feelings—"

"They might take Manchuria away from me," Mac snapped. "Yeah, I know." He felt silly, as though he had been guilty of schoolboy temper, of childish petulance. "Come on, let's get along to this party."

They went and the party was dull. The doctor and Lucia discussed educational affairs in the United States; once Mac cut in: "Talking about Columbia, do you remember when the Columbia was the big spot of the burlesque circuit?" but they stared at him as though he were a noisy boy.

He strolled to the window of the doctor's little paper-and-glass house, and whistled. Eight girls had lined up outside; which was not strange, in an island populated only by women. Only —the eight girls were wearing web car-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tridge belts around the tops of their bloomers, and there were nasty looking .45s in the belts.

The little doctor came over to him. "Yes, Mr. McNally," she said, looking out the window. "Our island police. Won't you come have another drink? I'm sure it will do you no harm."

"You're the doctor," he said unhappily. They went back to the cocktail table, and once again he kneeled on the floor.

THE doctor said: "Miss Lucia, you would not mind? Will you step in the next room, through that door there, and get me my Columbia yearbook? I want to see if you recognize anyone I know—"

The girl smiled, and got up to go get the book. Dave McNally said sharply: "But there's no room there, that goes—"

"Our Japanese architecture is so confusing," the doctor said. "It appears to be simpler than it is." She positively simpered as Lucia stepped through the door, which slid shut behind her.

"Well," the doctor said, "if you won't have a drink, Captain, let us go watch the girls dive. It is a sight that is very, very interesting."

Mac got up, reluctantly, suspiciously. "Hey," he said, "what's going on? Where's the girl?"

"Oh, on this island, we have very many girls," the doctor said, taking Mac's arm. "Come."

He backed away from her: "Those lady cops out there have pinched Lucia," he accused her.

"Oh, yes." The doctor smiled. "But then, what is Miss Lucia to you? You never met her—"

"She's an American," Mac said. He brushed the doctor aside, and rushed for the door.

A girl in a middy blouse that bore three chevrons stepped through it before he got there, and pointed a gun at him. If the girl was small, the gun was not.

Mac stopped, dead. "Okay," he said. His eyes were hard. "You've got me. What's the game? My papers are in order—" he began. Then he stopped. "Your man in Manila was awfully anxious to have me visit here. So what do you get out of it?"

"Oh," the doctor said, "please come and see the diving girls. I am only the doctor; the manager handles all that sort of thing. Please, do not make any trouble."

Mac said, pleasantly: "All right, I won't," and made a dive for the girl with the gun.

It was the first time this trip that he felt at home, and that was funny, because he had seldom, if ever, wrestled with a girl before, and certainly never with one so small. As his big fingers closed on the sergeant's wrist, she fired; but the bullet went high, broke tile in the doctor's roof.

The little doctor was hammering on his skull with a cloisonné vase.

The sergeant was strong for a girl. But a shove on her biceps, and her fingers opened, and McNally had the gun. He backed off, breathing hard, not from exertion. "Take me to somebody who can explain this hunk of piracy to me," he ordered the little doctor.

"Oh, please, Mr. McNally," she said. "You shouldn't have done that. That poor girl may kill herself with disgrace now."

"Cut it out," he said. "Cut it out, and now. I'm tired of this tea-party nonsense; I want to know what is going on."

"Sir!" Tom Panaki wailed behind him. "You have spoiled everything."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

McNally turned, saw the gun in Tom's hand, brought his own gun around to bear on his mate. The sergeant girl hit him full in the face with a tea table; she was fast as light.

He staggered, and they had the gun. Tom's gun covered one side, the sergeant's the other; there was not much use in doing anything but stand still.

"Please, Mr. McNally," the doctor said. "You will come see the diving girls?"

VI

THE little doctor tripped along at McNally's side, holding on to his tensed forearm. Behind, the polite Tom had given his arm to the sergeant; they carried the guns. McNally walked because he had to, and he kept his mouth shut. His thoughts would have passed no censor.

Tommy, my boy—he thought—if I ever get you to sea again, I'm going to take the brown hide off you in strips. You—you Eagle Scout you. I'm going to keelhaul, plankwalk and bilge you, you polite buzzard.

McNally turned his head. "Done your good deed lately, Tom?"

"Sir, every day I do a good deed. Please, sir, do not misunderstand my actions; the girl, Miss Lucia, was not of a high type. She—"

"Was not? Was not? If you and your polite little chums have hurt her, you'll—"

"It is not as you think, sir. There—"

"Please, the manager will discuss business," the doctor said. "If you do not mind, Mr. Panaki."

"Eagle Scout Panaki," McNally said, nastily. "Were you a patrol-leader, too, Tom?"

"I am still Assistant Scout Master of my old troop," Tom said, proudly. "I do not see what my scouting activities have to do, sir, with the present situation."

"Please, gentlemen, do not argue," said the doctor. "Here are the diving girls. This is a sight, please, which you should observe closely; very, very few men ever see it."

"No, but I had to be lucky," McNally said. "Lucky McNally, that's me."

Against his will, the showman had to stop and admire. The girls on the dock, in the boats, were Japanese, to be sure; they had the short figures, the foreshortened legs, of their race. But what builds.

"Now, please," the doctor said. "Observe. The girls on the dock are preparing to dive by doing their breathing exercises. Please, you have a watch, Mr. McNally?"

"Yeah, but I'm not going to loan it for any tricks," McNally grated.

The doctor smiled her polite smile, and called aloud in Japanese. A girl came over, stood at attention in front of them. But her eyes drifted sidewise to rest on Tom. The Kanaka boy colored; scouting had not prepared him for the girl's costume.

"If you will time this girl's breathing, Mr. McNally," the doctor said. "Please, you will observe that our girls can hold their breaths for six minutes and over. Please, you will say ready, Mr. McNally."

The girl was turning her arms out, hands against her sides, slowly expanding her chest. McNally waited till the second hand came around to the top, said: "Ready."

The girl took a deep breath and stood still.

After that, time seemed to catch itself by the forelock and stand still. The second hand went around and around, and the girl just stood there, not mov-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing, not breathing; she seemed to lose the semblance of life and become a statue, and her costume was right, correct.

When the little hand had passed zero four times, McNally cried: "Tell her to breathe!"

The doctor smiled; the girl's face was not red yet. Another minute went by, and a sixth one; Tom Panaki was catching his breath in little gasps, and McNally's heart was pounding; the girl seemed to be smiling a little. At six minutes and twelve seconds she let her wind out, and the world moved again.

The girl regained her breath easily, without panting.

"IT IS easier, please," the doctor said, "when one is not working. Now, this girl will get her boat and her partner, and show us the oysters she nurses." She gave the girl—child, really—an order in Japanese.

They all got into the row boat and went out, the girl rowing, her partner watching through a glass-bottomed bucket. The oarsman's muscles rippled smoothly, like a race horse, as she sent the boat forward in long sweeps.

McNally said, "Six of them on a stage—"

The watcher called out, and the girl shipped the oars. There were buoys all around; the girls lashed the boat to one of them, and the girl who had been rowing stood up, took her breathing exercises again.

Then she cried something in Japanese, and went over the side. When she hit the water not a teacup full was splashed.

They leaned over the side and watched her go down the buoy anchor rope. Her assistant was laying out tools on the sternboard.

The buoy rope jerked, and the assistant promptly lowered a net-bag full of tools over. There was a stone attached to take them down.

"We have tried diving helmets," the doctor said, "but they are not so good. The girls cannot be delicate with their fingers, and the oysters die. You see, what we do is this—we bore a hole in a young oyster, and insert a speck of—well, a speck. That is our secret. The oyster immediately begins to make a pearl. But sometimes the hole sickens the oyster; then the girls give it medicine. Sometimes the pearl becomes misshapen; then they do other things. But all this must be done on the floor of the ocean; to move the oyster is to injure it." She took another breath, said: "These oysters are inedible, the edible oyster doesn't grow a commercial pearl. It takes from three to five years to—"

The diving girl broke the surface and climbed easily into the boat, tossing her bobbed hair back out of her eyes.

Her partner stood up, breathed, and went over; the first girl took the glass bucket and went on lookout.

"These girls come to us when they are nine," the doctor said, "and undergo rigorous training. We must weed out those who have any disorder of the heart, lungs or other organs. Those of an unstable disposition are also weeded out, and no men are permitted on the island except the manager. This is because psychological researches have shown us that a girl will steal to give to a man when she will not steal for her own account."

"Did you ever lose any pearls?" McNally asked.

"When we do we spare no trouble to recover them and punish the girl responsible," the doctor said. "As an

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

example; it is easy to identify our pearls, as each bed grows a different type, due to the food we give them, the temperature of the current, and so on. . . . The girl on the bottom is the junior one of the pair we see working; she does the feeding after this girl here does the doctoring. The oysters are fed with—"

The second girl came up, and McNally said: "I've had enough of this. Let's go see the manager. Every time one of these girls goes under water, I get the jitters."

The doctor said: "Please, it is as you wish." She ordered the girls in Japanese.

They started for shore, each girl now taking an oar.

Halfway in to shore another rowboat came near them, also heading in. The girls in the two boats exchanged laughing words, and then McNally realized that a race had been arranged; the stroke was quickened, the boat went faster than ever.

THE boat pulled neatly alongside the dock, where an instructor in middy blouse and bloomers was giving breathing lessons to little girl apprentices. The senior pearl-nurse leaped out, landing smoothly, put down her hand to help the passengers out. The doctor went first, then McNally.

He tried to avoid the girl's outstretched hand, feeling it humiliating to be hauled up by a woman. But she caught his hand anyway, pulled him up without apparent effort. He stopped next to her, put his hand on her biceps; they were as hard as stone, as sexless as a machine. He understood what the man in Manila had meant by the girls having trouble finding husbands.

He turned. Tom Panaki was communicating with the girl under his breath; the words were in Japanese, McNally couldn't catch them.

He said: "Naughty, naughty, Tom."

The mate blushed again, looked ashamed, "Sir, not as you think, I—"

"The manager will explain to Mr. McNally," the doctor said firmly. "Please, you come, Captain."

"Sure," McNally said. "I guess. It's about time there were some explanations."

They went up a little, neat path; not an ant hole, not a fallen leaf soiled it. Every rock on the island had been brought there from Japan, he knew; every hunk of coral, had, apparently, been shaped into something new and moved. The place was like a Japanese garden.

They passed a Shintoist shrine, which some girls were busily redecorating. McNally said: "How many girls on the island?"

"Four hundred on this one. But this is only one plant of our company, and we are not the largest pearl-culture company in Japan. The greatest—"

"Let it go. This Cook's Tour business gets me down. Well, with four hundred, you ought to be able to spare me my six that I want."

"And, sir, here is the manager's house," Tom Panaki said. "Now you will see, I am no villain."

"How did you know this was where the manager lived, then?"

"Sir, the sign over the door says so."

"So you read Japanese, too, Tom? Boy, what an education."

"Sir, thank you for the compliment."

"It wasn't meant as a compliment."

They had to take off their shoes to go into the manager's house; when they put them down, McNally stopped, startled. There were other pairs of shoes there, but one pair in particular

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

interested him—a pair of low heeled slippers, obviously American.

The girl was in here.

The little sergeant had been following discreetly; she took up a position by the shoes. McNally measured the distance to her gun, and let one shoulder down, ready to leap.

Tom Panaki caught him as he took off; the Kanaka's hands grabbed McNally's shoulder. Dave McNally was pulled around, facing his mate; the American's left fist came up, lashed into Tom's face.

The Kanaka took a step backward, and went for his gun. McNally gave up trying to make it for the sergeant; he tackled with Tom Panaki.

Something hit between McNally's shoulder blades, and he thought he was stabbed or shot for a moment. Then the thing moved, and he realized it was the tense, struggling body of the little girl-sergeant.

He twisted his big shoulders, and sent her flying.

TOM PANAKI took advantage of the break to grasp one hand on McNally's throat, the other hand on his own gun. The strong brown fingers cut into his windpipe, and McNally fell.

As he plunged forward he was aware of a lot of things, and not aware of them at the same time. Things like—his ear nearly being torn off—his shirt splitting up the back—a gun roaring. Then a huge shock, and afterwards, somehow, he was up on the porch of the manager's house, staining the oiled paper door with blood from a crushed left arm, and holding Tom Panaki's gun on a crowd of island policewomen and on Tom.

"Please," the doctor cried, "you misunderstand, Captain McNally."

He said: "Okay. If anybody comes at me, they'll misunderstand, too."

His stocking foot went through the paper door, ruined it, and he backed up, was in the house. He called: "Lucia! Hey, Lucia!"

She cried: "Yes, yes, this way, McNally."

He plunged through a couple of paper doors and found her.

She had on a Japanese kimono that was too short for her. Her hair was wild. She was standing in a room where sat a man, an aged, almost ageless Japanese man in black silk kimono. He said: "I am the manager, please. You must listen to me, Mr. McNally."

Mac said: "Okay. Stand up, Mr. Manager." He moved behind the man, got him out to the wrecked porch. "Tell that crowd to get a hundred paces from the house and stay there. Quick!"

"With pleasure, Mr. McNally. I am very, very happy to do so. The manager burbled Japanese softly, and the women moved back.

"That," bawled McNally, "means you, too, Tom." He watched the Kanaka walk backwards.

McNally said to the manager: "And to think I cut that guy out of a jail. He was in for murder."

"Which he did not commit," the manager said. "Please, I am very, very sorry we have deceived you, Mr. McNally. Won't you honor me by coming to my room, and letting me explain."

"And how. Now, Manager, start backing up. My gun's going to be pressing you all the time."

Going that way they crept back to the room where Lucia had been. She was still standing there.

"I don't know why I'm going to all this trouble for you," McNally growled. "Except I figured I was next. What did they do to you?"

"They're crazy women," the girl

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sobbed. "They took my clothes to search. They—"

"All right," the manager said, "you have said enough, young lady. Mr. McNally, now for the explanations—they would have been forthcoming in any event. You stopped at an island where there was a Dr. Noyes and a Monsieur Daugnard. Right?"

"I like your English," McNally said. "Yeah. Right. Tom killed Noyes."

"But, no," the manager said. "Daugnard killed Noyes. You see, Noyes was a very brave man, and a very bad one. He stole some pearls from us—"

"How? By disguising himself as a diving girl?"

"How cannot be told," the manager said. "That is something we do not want repeated." He looked at the gun in McNally's hand, and said: "Not if you shoot me. One more—mishap of the sort Dr. Noyes committed, and I should be dishonored."

"Hari-kari, eh? Okay, go on. I don't believe a word."

"NOYES wrote this—wrote Miss Lucia to come visit him," the manager said. "She was to get the pearls back to the States. But the pearls, you see, are partly Monsieur Daugnard's. His share for sheltering Noyes."

"And Daugnard had Noyes killed."

"Yes. Mr. Panaki had persuaded Daugnard that he could keep you in ignorance, make you run the pearls back to Manila for him. Mr. Panaki is a very persuasive young man."

"Yeah. Yeah, I get that. He was working for you, was he?"

"Yes. He has ambitions to be a private detective. You see, everything is neat when you know. By working on you, Mr. Panaki got you to pick up the girl and bring her to us. You are well known, could get the sailing papers and so on."

"Yeah. You got your pearls back?"

"Oh, yes," the manager said. "We have our pearls back. The girl had them."

Dave McNally sat down, the gun dangling between his fingers. He sat on a low tea table, because there were no chairs. Yes, everything had been very neat. Probably—undoubtedly—Tom had given him something to simulate fever. The dirty— He looked at Lucia. "Did you have the pearls?"

"Yes," she said. "But I didn't know they were stolen."

McNally whistled soundlessly between his teeth. "How did you people know I even thought of coming out here? How did you—"

"A bus boy in San Francisco," the manager said. "When you were talking in a restaurant to a friend, Mr. Loeb."

"Yeah, my agent. I suppose you had your men looking all over the Coast for someone who had the idea of coming here. You would." Dave McNally stood up. "Of course, you won't let me sign up the six girls I wanted. That was just a ruse. To get me here."

"Oh, but yes," the manager said. "We are very, very grateful to you. The six girls—they would graduate in a month—are already in the forecastle of your ketch. I have taken the liberty of drawing up contracts, which they signed."

"Well, I'll be a—" McNally stood up. "So long, Manager. Come on, Lucia."

The manager said: "No. The lady stays here."

Mac said: "I knew there was a catch. She goes with me. The good Lord knows I don't want her; when I get her, I'm going to lock her in the spare

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cabin till we make Manila. But she goes."

The manager said: "No. I am very, very sorry, but—"

Mac caught the old man up, got a half Nelson on him. "I am very, very sorry, too. Let's go. Lucia, get behind me."

MAC forced the old man through the front door. He felt kind of bad about this, but the girl was a fellow countryman, and he couldn't leave her. He made the manager clear a path with his voice; they went through lanes of surly, muttering women.

When they came to the ketch, McNally said: "Lucia, get aboard. Throw off the hawsers."

He knew what this was costing him, knew he was a fool. Tough McNally. But he had to do it. When the girl called: "The hawsers are off, the boat's drifting—" he jumped, kicked the ketch free from the dock, pushed the self starter on the auxiliary, and grabbed the tiller. The manager screamed something, and there were six small splashes as McNally's attraction—his act—swam back to their island. Jake Loeb would think him crazy.

Cecil came pattering aft, said: "Me glad to leave them women. Glad Tom go, too."

"All right, boy, take the wheel." McNally glared at Lucia. "Go below, to the spare cabin, and don't come out till I call." He looked aft, where Tom Panaki's brown face shone among the yellow ones of the women.

Then he went down to his cabin to get a bandage for his wounded arm. There was a package on the table.

When he opened it, it contained three thousand dollars in American bills—new ones—and a note.

"Sir, I have hated to use you this way. This is your share of my reward for recovering the pearls—it is only fair you do not lose financially on your journey. I trust we shall meet again."

It was, of course, signed with Tom's name.

McNally sighed, went and knocked on Lucia's door. "Come on out," he called. "You're going to have to be cook till we make port."

She appeared, still in the kimono. "Yes, sir." Then she said: "What port are we going to?"

"The way I feel now," McNally said, "any port where I can catch a boat for Alaska."

Then he stared at Lucia for a long moment. "You didn't know those pearls were stolen?"

"No," she said.

CRACK MARKSMEN!

• Don't miss a whisker—let Star Single-edge Blades mow down tough stubble smoothly, cleanly, coolly! Every Star Blade has an extra-keen, uniform edge because this quality blade is made by the makers of the original safety razor! 4 for 10¢.

Star Blade Division, Brooklyn, N. Y.

FOR GEM AND EVER-READY RAZORS

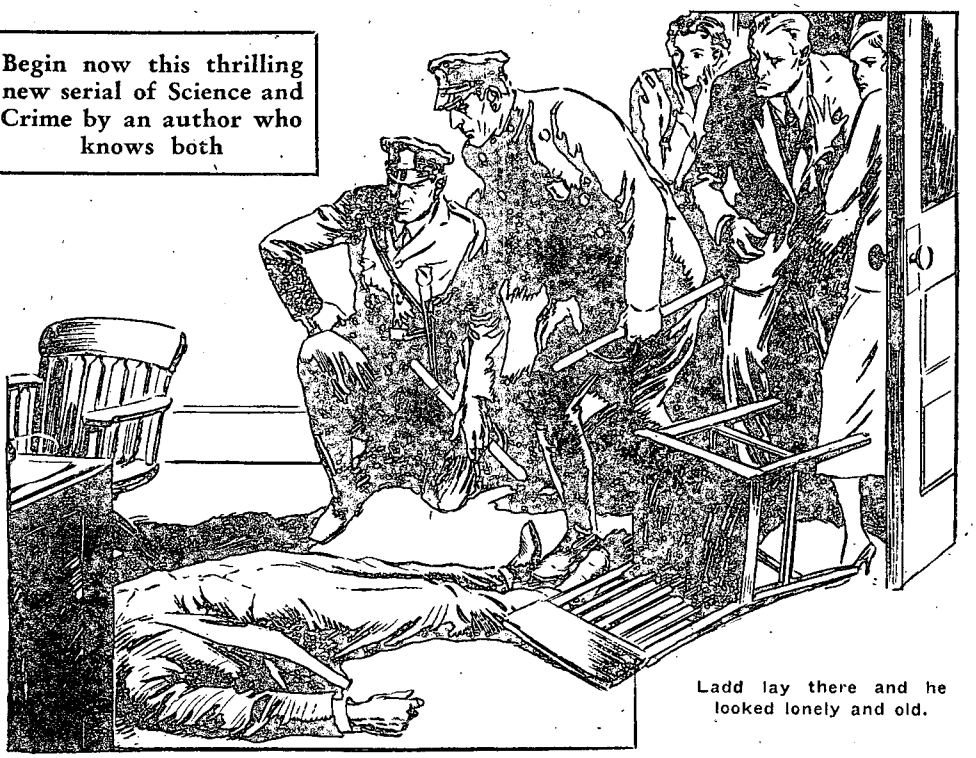
STAR Blades 4 FOR 10¢

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The World's Fair Mystery

By KARL DETZER

Begin now this thrilling new serial of Science and Crime by an author who knows both



Ladd lay there and he looked lonely and old.

GALLOPING off to the biggest and best World's Fair—ever—go brilliant, quaint Professor Harrison of miniscule Caxton College and his lovely daughter, Mary. Harrison—*Dr.* Harrison, please—is a physicist and when he arrives at the Fair he meets an old student of his, Arthur Stillwell, who is in charge of the electrical exhibit of the company he works for, Lakelands Electric Corp. Mary Harrison is quite fond of Arthur whom she affectionately calls "Punk."

The Fair is teeming with Caxton alumni, and alumnae. Beside Stillwell there are the general manager of his company, Freeman Roelke; and Rodney Jurney, manager of a rival Company, Sun Electric; and there are Frank and Eloise Fayette who have utilized their academic educations to gain riches as the proprietors of a huge chain of hot-dog stands. And then there is Agatha Hawley, middle-aged nuisance who is the widow of rich, recently deceased, Oliver Hawley, one of old Caxton's proudest sons.

PERHAPS the most important person at the Fair—at least to the world of electrical science and Dr. Harrison—is Dr. Alexander Ladd, physicist and wizard of the laboratory. Harrison has come to hear him lecture. But he is disappointed. Ladd doesn't get a chance to lecture because of Ladd's untimely death. He is found in Stillwell's office in the Science Building, murdered. Mary and her father find the body and Mary remembers something that

This story began in last week's Argosy

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

makes her afraid. She remembers that Arthur Stillwell had harsh and contemptuous words with Dr. Ladd that day.

CHAPTER V

THE WAND AND THE BUTTON

THUS, with my daughter clinging to my left arm and Eloise Fayette to my right, I came face to face with murder for the first time in my long life. The guide's light wavered. After my sharp exclamation, no one spoke.

How long we huddled thus I have no way of telling, but time enough elapsed to sear the fearful sight indelibly on my memory. I can see still each small, unimportant detail, the worn spot on Dr. Ladd's left shoe sole; the right trouser leg pulled up to show the garter above his sock; the way his white beard had caught under his coat lapel; his long bent fingers, thin like his face. But especially I recall one fact. Even so short a time dead, he looked lonely.

It was the guide who acted first. "Lights," he muttered, half to himself. He walked stiffly to the inner door, there fumbled, and the lights flashed so abruptly that Eloise permitted a surprised scream to escape.

"Touch nothing. Careful where you walk," the guide said. "Who is he? Do you know?"

I, who never had seen him in person until a few hours ago, was shocked now that anyone should not know. I answered, "Dr. Alexander Ladd."

He mumbled, "Don't know him. A doctor?"

"Of science," I said sharply, and the guide replied:

"Better take the young ladies out to the court. But don't go away."

The girls required no urging. From the doorway I saw the guide walk cautiously to the desk. He picked up the telephone, using only his thumb and forefinger.

"Jim Dunnigan talking," he said after a moment. "Colonel Jarrell there?" His voice was dry. "Colonel Jarrell? A man's been murdered in Electrical Building. Yes. Lakelands exhibit."

He hung the receiver back on its hook. I looked at my watch. It was twenty minutes after twelve.

"He's not been dead more than a few minutes," the guide said.

Mary whispered, "You're Dunnigan? It was you told Punk—Mr. Stillwell—that Mr. Roelke wanted him?"

Dunnigan nodded. "Yes. Mr. Stillwell left right away."

He turned back toward the body. I was still unnerved, even tempted to flee, yet I would not have left that doorway for all the money in the land. There lay the man I admired more than any other in my profession. Who in the world could have but the best of feelings toward him? What earthly reason could there be for killing him?

The girls were whispering. I heard a sob in Mary's voice. Then, while Dunnigan still peered about the room as if searching something he himself had misplaced, I heard Eloise utter a name that threw my memory back to the scene in this office before dinner.

"Ladd's a doddering old fool," Mrs. Hawley had whispered.

There had been malice in her tone, and now the old story came back to me. Oliver Hawley and Dr. Alexander Ladd never had been good friends. They had quarreled violently at a Scientific Research meeting in Boston about eight years before. It even had got into the newspapers. They both had read reports on the structure of

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the atom, and their viewpoints were so divergent, and each man was so positive, that what began as a scholarly discussion ended as a quarrel.

BY THE time the Exposition Police arrived, I already was trying to prove to myself that Mrs. Hawley could have had nothing to do with this murder. Of course, I had not yet heard of Mary's experience when she slipped into the Garden to pick up her purse and found Arthur Stillwell and Dr. Ladd arguing. Had I so much as guessed it, my distress would have been even greater. If Mary were fond of this boy, and if he . . .

Colonel Robert E. Lee Jarrell, chief of the Exposition Police, was a retired army officer. I knew his type, for I have seen many such officers commanding our Caxton R.O.T.C. He was taller than average, slimmer, stiffer. His face was so brown that his gray eyes looked almost white against it. He wore civilian clothing on this night. In fact, I never did see him in one of those crimson tunics that his guards wore.

He brought with him three men, leaving them at the door, while Dunnigan and he went in together. I remained outside, and after the pair had finished examining the body—I imagined what they were doing when they bent down beside the desk—I saw Jarrell turn and peer through the glass at me. Without hostility, let me say, merely with concern and curiosity.

He was about to call me, when quick footsteps sounded on the concrete walk and I saw Stillwell approaching rapidly.

It was then that Mary, for the second time, lost her self control. I can thankfully say, however, that it never happened again in the whole horrible week. As she recognized Stillwell, she ran to meet him, and flung herself upon him, crying like a child, and like a child the next moment she pulled herself away from him and shouted something angry and inarticulate at him.

"What is it?" he demanded. "What—?"

He caught sight of Colonel Jarrell and pushed Mary aside. As Jarrell and Dunnigan faced him in the office, undoubtedly they were observing his expression, to determine if they could, whether or not he was surprised at the sight that met him.

He did not speak, merely seemed to grow suddenly shorter, and his neck bent. He swayed, staring down at the floor. Then Dunnigan closed the door and I could not hear what the men were saying.

Colonel Jarrell told me afterward that to their surprise the young man's first words were to berate Dunnigan for allowing this thing to happen, although, as Colonel Jarrell took pains to explain, Dunnigan was merely a guide. His duties as watchman were secondary.

They naturally insisted that Stillwell give some account of himself. He explained, brokenly too, that when Dunnigan delivered Freeman Roelke's message to him an hour earlier, he had gone into the office and found Dr. Ladd still writing there.

"He offered to leave then, but I urged him to stay," Stillwell said. "Told him Professor Harrison would be returning in a few minutes, and would be delighted for a talk with him."

He telephoned to Roelke's hotel, with Dr. Ladd listening to him—though heaven knew the poor doctor was useless as a witness.

The hotel clerk reported that Mr. Roelke wished Stillwell to come there at once. It was exactly twenty minutes

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of twelve, the young man declared. He had noticed particularly because he wanted by no chance to miss Mary. Or, he amended, miss any of us. With that in mind, he had run for a bus, after going out of the west, or exit door, of the Garden and locking it after him—he was sure he had locked it.

ARRIVING at the hotel, so Stillwell's story ran, he discovered that Roelke already had left.

"Left an hour before I got there," Stillwell emphasized. "Became impatient and told the switchboard operator he'd come out here and find me himself."

"One minute, sir," Colonel Jarrell interposed. "You had telephoned the hotel just before you started over there, had you not?"

"And talked to the clerk. He didn't know Roelke was gone. It was the switchboard operator Roelke had told he was leaving."

All this, Stillwell contended, accounted for the time he had been away from the Electrical Building.

I saw through the glass that Colonel Jarrell and Dunnigan were listening intently, and once the colonel spoke briefly into the telephone. He had called the city police, I learned later, and asked for Sergeant Mulcahy of the homicide squad.

Before Jarrell came again to the door, Mulcahy arrived, and I confess I did not care for him in the beginning. He was a slow, fattish man, with a face for all the world like our campus clock, and a small knob of a nose a little off to one side. Mrs. Hawley said the next day, after he questioned her, that she had to fight off a temptation to thrust a pin into his cheeks. "They'd have burst like rubber balloons," she added.

Now, as Mulcahy arrived, he passed us—Mary, Eloise and me—without speaking. At the end of five minutes Colonel Jarrell called me.

I told him my few facts. He listened without comment. Mulcahy, on the other hand, interjected several questions which at the time seemed to have little to do with the crime. When I finished, the colonel asked for the young ladies.

As Mary and Eloise came in, Mary's eyes searched anxiously for Arthur Stillwell. He had gone to the desk and was staring with a puzzled expression at some object—I could not see what—that lay on the floor a yard or more beyond the body. As soon as Mary spoke, he turned. Her story was like mine. Sensibly, she did not mention what she had heard and seen in the Garden just before dinner; any more than I had mentioned Mrs. Hawley's indiscreet whisper.

"The group of you had dinner together," Colonel Jarrell repeated. "You left Dr. Ladd alone in this office. Was he locked in?"

"Oh, no," Stillwell denied. "He could get out whenever he wanted. Lakelands has two rooms, you see, this office and the Garden." He motioned toward the exhibit room. "The Garden opens directly into the Great Hall—you know all this lay-out, Colonel."

"Garden opens into the Hall by two doors," Dunnigan put in, "one for the crowd to come in by, the other for leaving."

"Both these doors have night latches," Stillwell said quickly. "I told Dr. Ladd he could get out into the Great Hall through either of them, but nobody without a key could get in. I had set both latches myself, so I know they were locked. The only other entrance into these rooms is through

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that outside door I just came in." He pointed, his hand shaking a little, toward the door Mary had discovered open. "I keep that locked," Stillwell said, "by the key on the inside. It isn't a night latch, you see."

Mulcahy demanded, "And who has keys?"

"Here." Stillwell pulled a key ring from his pocket. "These are for our two night latches from the Garden into the Hall. Good locks, you see. Hard to pick."

"Who else has got keys to 'em?"

"No one." Stillwell looked confused. "Except Mr. Roelke. I gave him one today. Two in fact. One for our exit door into the Great Hall. Another to get outdoors, from the Hall. We use that big door there at the foot of the Grand Staircase."

"Roelke, eh?" Mulcahy repeated. "So he can get into this building after ordinary folks is out?"

Stillwell flushed. "This exhibit is his property."

"Yeah, I see," Mulcahy said. "How about this other door right here?" He indicated again the one Mary had found open.

"Its key is right there in the lock," Stillwell said, "inside."

Mulcahy bent over. "Only it ain't."

Stillwell crossed, and stared at the empty keyhole. "But I left it there! When I went out tonight—left it locked and the key in it. Spoke to Dr. Ladd about it!"

"Mebbe this Roelke's got it, too," the sergeant hinted.

"Don't be an idiot," Stillwell snapped.

"You don't think it's funny," Mulcahy asked, "him calling you somewheres, just in time to have you out of the way for a murder? And not being on hand when you get there?"

"I see nothing funny in any of this!" Stillwell shot back.

COLONEL JARRELL intervened. "Don't get excited, Mr. Stillwell." He paused, listening to one of the officers in a red tunic. "Reporters? Tell them to wait, please. There's nothing to give anyone yet."

Mary and Eloise, who had sat back, listening, glanced out, at the colonel's words, and I saw Mary start. She arose immediately and walked to the group peering into the windows. There was one woman among them, and although I probably should have remembered her, I was too much confused for my memory to function properly. But Mary called to me and so I followed.

"Here's Anne Siddons," she said. "You know her. Caxton—my class. I'd forgotten she was here in Chicago. She's a reporter. Maybe she can help us."

I don't know what I answered, because I could not see how a reporter or anyone else could help us in the situation we were in. I did remember Anne, a dark, tall girl with large eyes and a great friend of Mary, but I was so upset that I returned to my place in the room without speaking. As I did so, Mulcahy was addressing Stillwell.

"Call it a wand if you want to. It looks like a weapon to me."

The men were gathered around some object on the floor, not far from Dr. Ladd's body—"corpse," Mulcahy twice unfeelingly had called it. They were looking at a slim polished metal staff about two feet long. Its handle was trimmed in what I learned later was real amber. The other end tapered to a sharp point.

Blood smeared this point, a small brownish stain which told me how poor Dr. Ladd had met his death. The

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wound in his chest over the heart had been caused by this sharp metal stick, which Mulcahy correctly termed a weapon.

"Can you identify it as yours?" Colonel Jarrell asked.

"Certainly it's mine," Stillwell flared. "I use it six times a day, every show I give," he motioned toward the Garden. "It's part of a—a stunt, sir."

I shuddered at the word. This, then, was part of the ballyhoo to which Dr. Ladd objected, and he had been killed by it.

"There's a target shield on the exit door," Stillwell tried to explain. "When my lecture's over, I point this wand at it and electrical energy in me leaps to the shield." He paused and blurted, "You wouldn't understand. . . . The crowd, some of them, think it's magic. I open the door electrically with the wand."

"It's the door of heaven it opened for Dr. Ladd, and no mistake," Mulcahy interjected. "Where was it, when you say you went out?"

Stillwell corrected, "When I went out, it was on the small table near the electric furnace in the outer room. I always leave it there."

Mulcahy stepped into the Garden and Stillwell followed.

"I'll turn on the lights," he offered.

As they left, Colonel Jarrell remarked uneasily: "I must talk to these newspaper people. They'll want your picture, Professor, and one of the young ladies. What shall I tell them?"

Naturally I refused. But that did not prevent photographers from snapping my picture in every conceivable position for the next forty-eight hours. In the doorway Mary halted the colonel and as she told me afterward, asked him if Anne Siddons might come into the office.

He consented. He himself was still talking to the newspaper men when two orderlies in white jackets arrived, followed by a short, sleepy individual who told me he was a coroner's physician. He did his work, whatever it was; made some notes; then the two orderlies carried poor Dr. Ladd away.

AS SOON as they were gone, Mary's friend, the newspaper woman, walked quickly to the place the body had lain. The roll of paper on which she had been writing dropped as she did so. She picked it up and returned to Mary.

I did not know until next morning that she had dropped the paper purposely. She really had stepped over to look at the steel wand, and in doing so, she had seen a button on the floor. She dropped the paper, therefore, and with it picked up the button, which Dr. Ladd's body had concealed.

I saw it next day. It was light brown and a peculiar shape, almost octagonal, such a button as is used most often on a top coat or light overcoat; somewhat too large for a business suit.

She stuffed it into her pocketbook, being particular not to lose the brown thread that dangled from it, and then, smartly I think, began to look around to see if any of us had lost it.

I could not know it, but within two minutes she identified it as belonging to Freeman Roelke, who arrived just then by the courtyard door. He carried his light brown shower-proof topcoat over his arm, and as he flung it on a chair, Miss Siddons strolled casually toward it.

"So *you're* here," Sergeant Mulcahy greeted him. "Now we're getting somewhere."

"What does this mean?" Roelke demanded of Stillwell. "Why didn't you

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

come when I called you? What's going on here?"

Colonel Jarrell told him in a few words.

"And where was you, all this time?" Mulcahy demanded. "But wait. . . . We don't need the ladies. You'd best take yourself a walk, or go to bed or something, ladies. Ain't that right, Colonel?"

Naturally I was glad to have Mary leave the scene, although if Sergeant Mulcahy only had known it, he was sending away two pieces of evidence. Mary's story, yet untold, of Stillwell's angry threat to Dr. Ladd, and the button from Freeman Roelke's coat, now in Anne Siddons' pocket.

Mulcahy questioned Roelke as soon as the three girls were gone. The general manager of the Lakelands company put on what I dare say was his best bargaining manner. He was telling little, exactly what he wanted and nothing more, when Dunnigan the guide interrupted.

"Look here, Colonel," he said with considerable embarrassment, "I know something I guess you ought to hear. I don't want to get an innocent person into trouble, but the more I think of it, it seems if he's innocent, he'll be glad to talk."

"You've known something all this time?" the colonel asked in surprise.

Dunnigan stammered, "With the ladies here . . . well . . ."

He began his story. Not having heard Mary's own tale, I could have no idea, of course, that young Stillwell might be implicated. And knowing nothing of the button Miss Siddons had found, Roelke's possible connection also was beyond my knowledge. In these respects the police were no better off than I. So as far as they or I knew, there was no single suspect. Therefore the guide's offer of information seemed to be the first real clue, as the newspapers insisted on calling these incidents.

"I was over by Social Science Hall," Dunnigan said, "half way down the steps when I heard Mrs. Fayette scream. You see, I knew her voice. When the Fair opened, I was assigned over there near her Filling Station, and I got to know her and her husband pretty well. When she called, I ran. I thought maybe she and Fayette were having trouble. He's jealous, you see. I hope this don't have anything to do with the case. She's a nice sort of girl, and I don't want her in a jam."

"Well?" demanded Mulcahy. He moved away from Roelke, who sat down and wiped his bald head with his handkerchief.

"Some twenty, thirty minutes before Mrs. Fayette screamed," Dunnigan went on, "I took a stroll down this way. These office lights were still on. That old gentleman, Dr. Ladd, was sitting here at the desk. I noticed his white beard. Told myself he looked like Santa Claus. Well, when I got back from the water, the court was deserted. Wasn't anybody anywhere. Only, I saw a man coming around the east end of the Electrical Building, walking fast. As if he were all bothered about something. So I stopped."

"Do you know what time that was?" the colonel asked.

"Not exactly. A little after twelve. About eight or ten minutes before Mrs. Fayette called. I wasn't thinking about the time. My trick lasts till two."

I interjected, "That's the man I saw from that tower."

"Probably," the guide agreed, and went on with his story. "When the fellow got where he could see into this office, he stepped up close, then backed

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

away, then turned, and looked all around."

"How far were you from him?" Mulcahy demanded.

"Not more than a hundred and fifty feet."

"Would you know him if you saw him again?" Colonel Jarrell asked.

"Oh, sure. I'd know him. Recognized him right away." Dunnigan paused. Not one of us moved a hair. "The man," he continued in a lower voice, "was Frank Fayette."

CHAPTER VI

THE MEN AT THE WINDOW

WE PULLED our chairs to the end of the office, as far as possible from the ugly brown stain on the floor. Nevertheless, there it lay. Shocking evidence that two hours ago Dr. Alexander Ladd had been murdered.

Certainly the killer was not among us! Even Sergeant Mulcahy, who suspected almost everyone at one time or another, admits now that he doubted it. But I confess that as the inquisitions went on, hour after hour, I came to realize that anything in the world was possible.

Every sophomore in college learns that chemicals harmless in themselves when stirred together in one tube may produce a violent result. It might be just as true of people, I reflected. Under the peculiar influence of other personalities might not any one of us develop homicidal tendencies?

Even the idea was incredible, but it kept coming back to plague me. I glanced at Freeman Roelke; at Mary's friend, Arthur Stillwell; remembering our dinner, I thought of Rodney Jurney and big Frank Fayette. Certainly none of these men could have suffered a complete unbalance. The suspicion was absurd. Roelke respected Dr. Ladd. He realized the scientist's commercial value to Lakelands Electric, or why would he have financed his experiments?

Stillwell had a quick temper, but goodness knows not a murderous one. Neither did Frank Fayette, or long before this he might have slain Eloise for flirting! And as it happened I never had seen Rodney Jurney show temper at all.

But if put together in the same room like chemicals in a tube, what reaction did Fayette or Roelke or Stillwell have on Dr. Ladd or Mrs. Hawley or Jurney, or any of us?

More practically, what could a professor of physics in Caxton college have to say to Detective Sergeant Mulcahy? Try as I might, I couldn't understand his language. As Dunnigan, of the Exposition Guard Corps, finished his disclosures involving Frank Fayette, Mulcahy slapped his big hand down on top of the electric water cooler and said,

"I guess we better knuckle onto this guy Fayette. Mebbe it'll get us somewheres. What else you holding out on us, Dunnigan? Any other little thing such as who done the killing?"

Dunnigan colored. "I've not been holding out. Only . . . well, Fayette's wife being here . . ."

"Um," Mulcahy responded, and jerked at his left ear. "You say he's jealous?"

"Everybody knows it."

"Of who?"

"Not me. Nobody in particular. Anybody that glances at her. She's pretty. But he didn't kill this old man."

"No?" Mulcahy asked, and added, "She's good looking enough."

Colonel Jarrell had gone to the door and was giving instruction to his men

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there. I heard him finish with Fayette's name, and the command, "Bring him here. At once."

TWO OF the guards departed, and I sat back anxiously. This affair was involving all of us, more and more. I had seen a flash of Fayette's jealousy tonight at dinner when he took offense at young Jurney, but the thought that he might have been jealous of Dr. Alexander Ladd was too preposterous to entertain.

Dunnigan was a sober, honest-looking individual, however unusually keen, I believed for a man in his position. While Eloise Fayette was waiting for us at the bottom of the tower, had she seen her husband, too? How long had she been talking to the guard when we descended? She would have had ample time to walk all the way here to the Electrical Building and return while we were aloft. If she had seen him, would she protect him? Women, I'm told, have done as much even for a jealous man.

There was a small electric clock over the door to the outer room. I watched its hands move around an hour while Sergeant Mulcahy questioned first one, then another. It was a difficult ordeal.

"Keep down to earth, Doc," the sergeant directed me, when it came my turn to speak. "Sure, this guy Ladd was a big shot in the scientific game. That's got nothing to do with it. I want to know who killed him."

I know now that only his manner was offensive, that he had no thought of being disrespectful.

"And now you, young fellow," he challenged Arthur Stillwell next. "Tell me all about it this time."

Stillwell answered with the same quick anger he had shown toward Fayette at the dinner table. But he went over his whole story again, beginning with his appointment to meet Mary at the train, which seemed important to him. "I looked around the hotel lobby for Mr. Roelke," he finished, "and then came back here, expecting to find Dr. Ladd still writing at my desk."

"Wait a minute," Mulcahy halted him. "What was this old fellow writing? Where's it now?"

He started toward the desk, but Colonel Jarrell said, "There is no sign of papers, letters, anything. I looked in the desk some time ago, Sergeant."

"Oh, you did?" the sergeant answered, and glanced in disapproval at the Exposition chief. "Any other little discoveries?"

"A couple," the colonel answered, and smiled.

Mulcahy was taken back. He drew in his fat cheeks, pursing his lips, even started to speak with some vigor, then thought better of it. His mouth, whenever he opened it, made a perfect triangle. Roelke, who sat with his chair tipped back against the wall under a bracket light that reflected brightly on his bald head, laughed openly at the appearance Mulcahy made, and the detective turned on him.

"What's so comical?" he asked.

Roelke answered defiantly, "A number of things, Sergeant. Your face for one. And the way you handle this investigation. A ten-year-old boy could do better. You're asking the same questions over and over of the same small group of us. What are you trying to do, trip one of us into a confession? There were a few other people in the grounds tonight, beside this half dozen of us. You haven't even looked for fingerprints."

"You've been reading books," Mulcahy commented. "Know all about fin-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gerprints, do you? Well, you notice I haven't let anybody fuss around the desk, and nobody's picked up the wand and waved it yet, has he? That is, if you call it a wand. Looks more like a pigsticker to me. We're waiting for the fingerprint men. They're tied up on another case right now. Does that answer your question?"

HIS WORDS were civil enough, but his manner was as insolent as Roelke's own and the latter took umbrage immediately.

"That explains part of it, but I still contend there were other people about the grounds. Dr. Ladd may have had many personal enemies."

"You are right about the people, Mr. Roelke," Colonel Jarrell agreed pleasantly. In the whole progress of this case, I never heard him speak impatiently. "Only, nine tenths of them could never find their way to this office. It is too remote. That cuts out quite a number. At twelve o'clock tonight, there must have been around twenty thousand people in the grounds. Ten percent of that number brings us down to two thousand." He smiled.

"And you concentrate on five of us?" Roelke demanded.

"We ain't started concentrating yet," Mulcahy broke in. "Maybe we can right now. Your story is so full of holes we can throw a cat through it."

"Full of holes?"

"You haven't told us the half." Mulcahy stepped so close to Roelke that he must have seen the drops of perspiration on the bald man's head.

Colonel Jarrell interrupted diplomatically. "It's this way, Mr. Roelke. In any crime, we must take certain things into consideration. Motive and opportunity, among others. What motive would these two thousand people have?"

"What motive would I have, now that you're getting personal?"

"None, that I can put my finger on yet," the colonel admitted. "There could be any of a dozen motives. Revenge, greed, jealousy, and as I say, there's the matter of opportunity. The reason we must question this particular group is that you all were with Dr. Ladd at some time during the afternoon or evening. Besides, we hear from Mr. Stillwell that you had a key to this office, and another to the building."

Roelke stared at him. "But why would I kill him?" he demanded. "It's preposterous. Ladd's death means a loss, a great loss, to my company."

Stillwell, too, started to speak, but Mulcahy cut him short.

"When you left this place about six o'clock tonight, Mr. Roelke, you say you went over to your hotel and ate your supper. Is that right?"

"I had my dinner, yes."

"And around eleven o'clock you send post haste for this young fellow you got working for you." He indicated Stillwell, who flushed. "Lord knows what you wanted of him at that hour of the night."

Roelke answered stiffly, "I had some letters I wanted to get off in the morning mail."

"Well, he gets to your hotel about five or ten minutes past midnight, according to your story. But somebody over there tells him you couldn't wait. You'd left the hotel to come rushing over here an hour before. That must have been a few minutes past eleven. Call it a quarter after. And you turn up here almost two hours later. It's less than half an hour's walk from your hotel to that chair where you're sitting. Where was you the rest of the time?"

Roelke's feet stopped swinging. The question, although blunt, was entirely

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fair. It was Mulcahy's manner that was unfortunate and his habit of jumping at conclusions. Roelke took his time to answer. Sweat still stood on his bald head.

"I was strolling," he said at length.

"Yeah," Mulcahy agreed, "strolling. Whereabouts, and with who?"

"Around the Exposition grounds. What do most people do at a fair? I paid no particular attention where I went! There's lots to see. I came in at the North Gate and walked up the Avenue of Flags, I believe, across the bridge by the Hall of Science and along the lagoon. Not this way—down past the Federal Building. There was a good band there. I stopped to listen."

"How long?"

"I didn't time myself."

"See anybody you knew?"

"No one."

"I heard that band from the tower," I interrupted.

Mulcahy merely looked at me. "And then you come over here . . ." he prompted Roelke, but the Lakelands official was on the quick defensive.

"No, not then. I came here when you saw me come."

"Just walkin' around," Mulcahy grunted, "takin' a breath of air and listenin' to bands, and murder going on in your own exhibit."

ROELKE'S chair legs hit the floor and he stood up with considerable dignity, at least with more than he had been showing. He took off his pince nez and demanded, "You are accusing me? If so, bring your charges!"

Once more Colonel Jarrell stepped in calmly. His politeness soothed Roelke. Nevertheless, it was a scene which I do not again wish to witness. We all were on edge. Of course I can not know what my own appearance was, but Arthur Stillwell and his employer both looked like condemned men. Dunnigan's face was pale, which made him seem even more like a young boy, and he fidgeted with the crimson ornament on his purple cap.

Colonel Jarrell was saying, "We are only trying to find the truth, Mr. Roelke," when we heard a commotion at the door.

It startled me, and I swung quickly around. The reporters who had been lounging there were active suddenly, and I discovered that two of the red-jacketed guards were hurrying a man past the windows.

"Your name?" the reporters were demanding. "What's your name?"

The man in custody struck out with his right fist but missed hitting anyone. "You go to hell!" he shouted.

The guards fairly pushed their prisoner into the room, then turned and drove back the reporters, and I assure you it was a moment of give and take. The man was Frank Fayette. His eyes were blazing and his clothing was twisted awry. He had been arguing with the guards until his voice was hoarse and he turned on the colonel furiously.

"What's this all about?" he demanded. "What am I—" Then he saw me and cried, "Dr. Harrison, where's my wife? Where's Eloise? What have they done with Eloise?"

Mulcahy whistled under his breath and went to drag an extra chair out of the Garden. I stared at Frank Fayette. I could only recall the colonel's explanation about motives, and about jealousy being a common one. I started to tell Fayette what had occurred, but at mention of the death of Dr. Ladd, he shouted, "Yes, yes, those damn red coats told me that. Where's Eloise?"

He was somewhat, but only slightly,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pacified by my explanation that Eloise had gone with Mary to the hotel. For a minute he vented his rage on Colonel Jarrell, demanding: "You think I killed him? What would I kill him for? I didn't know the man, never saw him till tonight . . ." And then again to me: "Eloise promised to be home at a quarter of twelve, Dr. Harrison."

"That's true," I asserted. "It was my fault she was late. Mary and I went on one of the rides."

"Eloise didn't go with you?" he caught me up quickly.

"Have this chair, mister," Mulcahy interrupted. "Set down and cool off. Too hot a night to carry on. We got some questions we been waitin' to ask you."

"Who the hell are you?" Fayette wanted to know.

Mulcahy told him; outlined briefly the facts we had gathered. For the time being he dropped his attitude of suspicion toward Roelke. This was his method, it developed. Just when Roelke thought he could draw a deep breath, Mulcahy started at him again.

"So there you are," the sergeant finished, for Fayette's benefit. "Mr. Roelke's listenin' to the band concert, Stillwell's hunting Roelke, Doc Harrison and his two girls jauntin' around —your wife, yes, yes, I know. I haven't checked yet what she was doing at the bottom of the tower. Don't think it matters much. Set down, Fayette! Everybody's accounted for except you."

"What about Jurney?" Fayette demanded.

ASTOUNDED, I jumped to my feet. I had forgotten Jurney. He, too, had been at the dinner, but I knew that he had nothing to do with this, and so I told Sergeant Mulcahy, then and there.

"How do you know that?" he asked me. I confess that I found it impossible to answer him sensibly. Rodney had been a good student, but that, the detective told me, didn't mean what he termed a "damn thing." He continued his assault on Frank.

"Now when Doc there," he pointed his thumb at me, "was up on the tower he sees somebody come look in these windows. And Dunnigan—he says he knows you pretty well—he sees somebody, too."

"What about it?" Fayette asked.

"This about it. He recognized the party. It was you."

Fayette leaned back defiantly in his chair, and then he astonished us by asking, "Well, what if it was?"

Mulcahy was taken off his guard, but Colonel Jarrell shot a question immediately.

"What were you doing there?"

"I was looking for my wife."

"Jealous, was you?" Mulcahy asked.

Fayette swore at him. I never had heard him use such language and it convinced me that the restaurant business had done no better for him than college.

"Jealous of Ladd?" Mulcahy persisted.

"Of Ladd?" Fayette laughed excitedly. "Him? Jealous of that old goat?"

Needless to say, I was shocked beyond anything I can explain. That any man should treat the dead with such little regard! Certainly it was no manner in which to speak of the humblest person, but to use a word like that in reference to Alexander Ladd. . . . I even hesitated before setting it down here, knowing it best left unsaid. However, I promised Mary to make a record of all that transpired, so Fayette's blasphemous statement must go with the rest.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Why were you looking for your wife in this office?" the colonel asked.

"Lord, Colonel, you're dumb!" Fayette snapped. "Because . . . well, if you can't see, you can't see!"

I had observed that he twisted his head repeatedly to scowl at Roelke, who at no time met his eyes. The Lakelands executive was growing more and more uncomfortable. The light still shone directly on his head and the room was stifling. There was no carnation in his buttonhole tonight. At length, mopping his face, he made the discovery:

"There are no fans running in here, Stillwell."

The younger man jumped up and turned on half a dozen. They did relieve some of the discomfort, and also gave Mulcahy an idea.

"No windows open in here last night?" he asked.

"Never are," Stillwell answered.

"Never?"

"Our company manufactures fans, sergeant," Roelke said, and meant it as a joke, but Mulcahy did not see it.

"These windows are not made to open," Stillwell pointed out. "The building is ventilated."

"Prefer windows myself," Mulcahy grumbled, and we laughed, at nothing, to be sure, but it relieved the tension, and to distract us further, the fingerprint men arrived.

"It's geting late," the colonel decided then. "We'll need you all in the morning, but before you leave tonight I want to get one thing straight. When you looked in, Mr. Fayette, was Dr. Ladd in the room?"

"Yes."

"Where, sir?"

"At the desk, writing."

"Anyone else in the room, Mr. Fayette?"

"No."

"Did you notice this outside door open, sir?"

Fayette shook his head.

"No."

IT CAME to me that Fayette was keeping something back. I did not exactly doubt the truth of his replies, but it was apparent that he spoke with some evasion.

"How long did you stand looking in, Mr. Fayette?" the colonel asked.

"I didn't stand," he denied. "I started away. Then I thought possibly they"—he did not explain who "they" were—"might be in the other room, so I came back to look. I could see the Garden through the open door, but it was dark, so I started away again."

"Started, you say?"

"Started. I was turning to go when I saw Dr. Ladd get up quickly from his chair and go out into the Garden. I waited a minute, then, thinking maybe Professor Harrison and the girls had come in through the building, but the lights in this office suddenly went out."

"Lights went out with you watching?" Mulcahy objected. "How could that happen if you didn't see nobody turn 'em out?" He glanced searchingly around the walls.

Stillwell volunteered, "The switch to this office light is out in the Garden by that door." He indicated the one between the two rooms. "Dr. Ladd may have turned off the lights himself. He may have been ready to go."

Fayette gave information for the first time of his own accord. "I saw this guide watching me near those pylons. As I started away, he turned, too, and went on back toward the steps."

"You mean the Social Science steps?" the colonel asked.

"Those west ones. He didn't see this other man . . ."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Another man?" Dunnigan exclaimed. "No, sir!"

"I can't help it if you didn't see him," Fayette retorted. "He was there. You had your back turned, whistling *Shuffle Off To . . .*"

"Just a minute," the colonel interposed. "You say, Dunnigan, no one else came into the courtyard. Careful. This is important."

"I didn't see anybody else, sir." Obviously the guide was thinking hard. "I guess maybe I did go up the steps about then."

"Your back would be turned for some time?"

"As long as it took me to walk up the steps."

"How far?"

"A couple hundred feet, sir, maybe more. There was a cat yelling on the balcony. I went to chase it away . . ."

"What are you hired for?" Mulcahy objected. "To chase cats? Better keep your eyes open."

"You say, there was another man, Mr. Fayette?" Colonel Jarrell seemed dubious. "Did you recognize him?"

"I thought I did," Fayette snapped. He was indignant at both Jarrell and Dunnigan. "As it turned out, I did, too. He didn't see me. He came straight toward this office. He was alone, though, so I knew my wife wasn't with him. So I went back south around the outside of this building to my restaurant."

"Who was this man?" Colonel Jarrell asked.

"Roelke."

We all turned and looked at Roelke. Perspiration dripped from the end of his nose.

Mulcahy looked at him a moment, then looked once more at Fayette. Without further questions for either of them, the detective said to Colonel Jarrell, "I guess you're right, chief. Not much more to do here tonight. Fayette and Roelke can take a little walk with me, and then a little ride down to headquarters."

"Headquarters?" Roelke yelled. He wiped his face. His shirt, where it showed in the V of his coat, was wet with perspiration. Even his cravat—it was a pale blue one tonight—looked damp. "You can't take me to headquarters."

"Can't?" the sergeant answered.

Stillwell, too, objected, insisting that if Freeman Roelke went, he must go also, but Roelke himself forbade this.

"Am I to understand I'm under arrest?" he asked.

"Whatever put that into your head?" Mulcahy answered. "No, you ain't. Only I could sit all night listening to you, I'm so interested in what you have to say."

We watched Roelke and Frank Fayette marched away by that uncouth policeman, both of them protesting quite naturally, and Mulcahy insisting that he was not arresting them, just taking them along.

I remembered after they were gone that in all this discussion and argument before the two officers, no one had mentioned Mrs. Hawley.

CHAPTER VII

THE ELECTRIC EYE

THIS is how matters stood at three o'clock that hot morning when Colonel Jarrell called a taxicab and I started, confused and shaken, for my hotel. The cab driver came as near as he could to the Electrical Building door, but even so, I must pass the newspaper men.

Again they were most insistent that I pose for a photograph, which again I refused to do. I fear that I lost my

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dignity when one of their number fired a flashlight bomb at me, for I remember distinctly referring to him as a gunman. The picture which the young man took, rather the newspaper reproduction of it, is now on the table before me, and I assure you that it might be either Sergeant Mulcahy or Mahatma Ghandi, for all its resemblance to me. The headline over it says, "Prof Quizzed in Mystery Murder."

I do not resent it, however, as much as the one in which I was snapped attempting to strike an insolent photographer with my umbrella. For I am not by nature a belligerent man, and it gave the public the wrong impression of me. Particularly since this newspaper published it with the headline, "Prof Kayos Press Photog."

I mention these matters only to show how many unfortunate episodes there were that bore in no way on the crimes, but did serve to confuse and disrupt clear thinking.

However, on this night, I finally got into the taxicab and started back to the hotel. It was not until the next day that I heard from Colonel Jarrell the other events which transpired between three and six that morning. For the sake of keeping clear this record, I shall set them down here in their actual order, even though my information, being second hand, is not as detailed as I might wish.

After I left the Exposition grounds, Chief Jarrell spent some twenty minutes attentively watching the fingerprint men. Then, one by one, he interviewed the fair ground guards who had been on duty in and near the Electrical Building from eleven o'clock on.

He discovered that one of them, Milbauer by name, had walked through the Great Hall a few minutes past twelve.

You understand, of course, that throughout this main floor of the Electrical Building, there were hundreds of manufacturers' exhibits, some of them enclosed in rooms, as Lakelands', some in open booths. For instance, at the extreme south end, almost a thousand feet around the circle from the Grand Stairway, was Rodney Jurney's exhibit for Sun Electric; which, as it happened, I was never to visit.

Four principal doors led from this immense foyer into the grounds. First, from the standpoint of beauty and position, was that broad entrance with its flame-colored ceiling, which Mary, Mrs. Hawley and I had used when we first came into the building. Another exit, in this case a series of five glass panels, opened into the court between the bottom of this stairway and the Lakelands exhibit. It was one of these doors to which Stillwell and Roelke both had keys, and through which Dr. Ladd had been expected to leave.

Another exit, at the far south end, gave onto a big, windy observation platform. The fourth, and least pretentious opening, into the circular plaza south of the Great Hall, was commonly called by people hunting their way out, "the middle door."

All of these entrances were locked at ten o'clock. Guards, inside as well as out, inspected the building regularly through the night, and in line with this duty Milbauer had entered by the Grand Stairway, and proceeding slowly, had moved around the wide half circle toward the opposite end.

His purpose, he explained, was to seek any stragglers who might have dallied too long. He claimed now to Colonel Jarrell that when he was at a point in the Great Hall about fifty yards from the Lakelands exhibit, he thought he heard a shout. He halted, listening and watching.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This, Milbauer estimated, was probably five or six minutes past twelve o'clock. Hearing and seeing nothing further, he decided that the sound had come from the grounds, and he continued his patrol and let himself out the south door.

MILBAUER'S story seemed at the time to be of little importance, but we know now that the fact that he stopped and listened there in the Great Hall served to complicate seriously the solution of this crime.

How could the colonel know this? At the time he was more interested in the fingerprint men than in Milbauer.

They had picked up the steel wand first. Its sharp, spiked end, as I have said, was stained with blood for a distance of four or five inches, but the short handle seemed clean.

"My prints will be on that," Stillwell warned. "I use it six times a day."

An expert answered, "In that case, we'll likely find only a bunch of smears, like on a door knob." He applied the powder to it, and after a moment said, "No prints at all. No smears. It's been wiped clean."

The colonel placed significance on this fact. Indeed, I was to learn, it set in motion an entirely new train of theories in his mind. Whether it absolved Stillwell or merely wound the net tighter about him, he would not say, but he took satisfaction in knowing that the murderer had gone to the trouble of wiping the steel wand after committing the crime.

By the time they completed the final examination of the rooms, several startling facts had been disclosed. It appeared, however, that it was Stillwell and not the police who made these disclosures.

Because the body of Dr. Ladd lay in the office, and not in the Garden, less attention had been expended on the larger room. Now Jarrell entered it. As I have explained, the Wonder Garden was not a garden, nor was it wonderful, at least to me. It *was* wonderful to Mary, but as you know by now, this was because of Arthur Stillwell.

A few palms and plants were grouped to create an illusion of tropical setting, and upon the stage and around the walls were the electrical devices whereby Stillwell demonstrated in popular forms a few old and well-known laboratory principles.

Colonel Jarrell intended to find out for himself exactly what these pieces of apparatus were. But the subject was strange to him, and he quickly became bewildered. So much so, he admitted to me later, that he gave up that end of the investigation for the time being, and turned his attention to the doors.

He had seen doors before, he said; but never anywhere a tray full of coins that could give off a loud ringing sound apparently of its own accord as soon as he stepped near it. Nor a photograph of his voice. Nor the sound of his shadow. But he didn't want Stillwell to know this, so he asked bruskly:

"You say there are several keys to these doors?"

Two for the exit, Stillwell repeated. One for the entrance. He never had had a second one.

"I don't say that this actually occurred," Colonel Jarrell said. "But Dr. Ladd sat in a brightly lighted room. Would it be possible that someone saw him there, rapped on the glass and Dr. Ladd opened the door?" He admitted that it was only a theory, and finished by declaring that his contract with the Exposition managers did not include murder, and that no one should expect a drillmaster to solve such crimes.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"IT WAS plain to see," Colonel Jarrell told me afterward, "that the talk about the doors and their keys bothered Stillwell from the first. He went now to the entrance and looked thoughtfully at it."

The colonel followed him. Just within the door, you may remember, stood the photo-electric cell demonstrator. Stillwell lifted its metal lid, and after a moment said:

"The murderer came in this way, Colonel."

The colonel laughed, he admits. He thought actually that the young man had gone crazy.

Unfortunately he never had examined before what the public calls the "electric eye." Stillwell tried to make it clear to him now that the photo-electric cell, which as everyone knows resembles an ordinary radio tube, is sensitive to light; that in this instance it was tuned to respond to the ultra-violet ray, which, being invisible to the human eye, of course the colonel could not see, and therefore could not understand.

"All right," Stillwell said, "do what lots of others do. Call it, unscientifically, 'dark light.' "

I must admit that the young man had been clever in this arrangement. He had set his cell and its attendant coils and amplifiers on a table against the top of the casing on the right of the entrance door. Opposite it, on another table, stood a light unit which reminded Colonel Jarrell of an old-fashioned magic lantern. Behind its lens was suspended a small tube light, which emitted only ultra-violet rays.

The lens trained this light beam upon the cell, across the opening, so that anyone entering the room by this door, of necessity must break the beam. I may or may not have pointed out that this door (purposely, I realize now) had been built so narrow that only one person could enter at a time.

So long as it remained shut, nothing occurred, but the moment it opened eight or more inches, it pressed a switch and closed a connection which set the ultra-violet tube to glowing. Thus, whenever a visitor entered the Garden, he passed through the ultra-violet beam, breaking it, and the cell registered the fact.

Also, and this Colonel Jarrell for some reason found easier to understand, young Stillwell had harnessed the cell to a set of coils and some other foolish apparatus, which in turn was made to register upon an ordinary electric counting device. Thus he not only could count the number of persons visiting Lakelands' exhibit daily; but when a sightseeing crowd had gathered to witness his so-called scientific demonstration, he could ask anyone of them to count the number of persons in the room, and then himself display the "electric eye" to prove that this marvelous robot could count correctly.

I had seen Mary glance at the apparatus before we went to dinner that first night, and I had meant to tell her my objection to it. It was what Dr. Ladd called ballyhoo, a use of scientific principle for an utterly ridiculous purpose. I was wrong, Mary tells me now. For at twenty minutes past two that morning, Arthur Stillwell was staring at the ribbon of paper upon which the numbering machine punched its count.

"This registered the murderer in," he told Jarrell, "and then out again. The figures in the left column indicate persons entering the room. Those on the right persons leaving. Here's the time he came in, punched on the paper. Sorry it's so dim. *In* at three minutes after twelve and *out* at eleven after."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AT FIRST the colonel was loudly skeptical, but when Stillwell repeatedly demonstrated the apparatus, the chief demanded to know whether or not it could fail, just how accurate it was, and could it be introduced in evidence.

"Why," he inquired, "did you set it to trap a murderer before the murder actually occurred?"

Stillwell flushed. "I set it every night for the first show in the morning."

Stillwell had the only key to this entrance door. The one Mr. Roelke borrowed fitted the exit. And the one to the outer door leading from the office into the outside court was missing from its keyhole. That door stood open. Yet this photo-electric cell proved that the killer had neither entered nor departed through the open door, nor through the hall door to which Roelke had a key. He had used the door to which the only key was in Stillwell's pocket.

All of which was so confusing that Jarrell admitted that certainly someone was crazy.

By this time the fingerprint men reported that they were through, and had found nothing.

In the meantime, events of interest were happening elsewhere.

CHAPTER VIII

ZIPPERS ARE BETTER

FORTUNE spared me the affront of ever being questioned at police headquarters where Mulcahy examined his two suspects, as he insisted on calling Freeman Roelke and Frank Fayette

He questioned Roelke first, leaving Fayette seated in an outer room with the desk sergeant. The Lakelands officer was not to be frightened into any confession, and he demanded a lawyer, howled for one, as Mulcahy put it. Insisted this whole thing was a plot of business rivals, by which undoubtedly he meant Sun Electric, to cast disrepute on the Lakelands company.

He cried, "Do you know who I am? General manager, Lakelands Electric. Know what that means? It means if you try to lock me in this jail . . ."

"Are you calling this a jail?" Mulcahy asked. "This here's a headquarters. You're not in jail. Whoever heard of such a thing!"

They argued, and Roelke became more and more excited. He railed first at Sun Electric, and then at Frank Fayette, blaming them equally for his predicament. At length, and by this time Roelke's bald head must have been dripping again with perspiration, he calmed and said, "I didn't want to bring this up, Sergeant. You must see . . . my position, wife, everything. People might misunderstand. But this Fayette is jealous and for no reason at all. Last night I was walking . . . not last night. Night before . . ."

Mulcahy was not interested in the night before, only in last night.

"I'll come to that," Roelke cried. "The night before explains it. I'd met Mrs. Fayette several days earlier. At their restaurant. Some junior engineers took me there. I saw her, talked to her."

"Was her husband in?"

"No. Then, night before last, I was strolling on the grounds by the lagoon when I met her. She spoke to me. We sat down on the seawall just for a minute and were talking when Fayette happened along. Became abusive. Wanted to know what I was doing with his wife."

If Mulcahy had known how many walks Roelke had taken in the last few days, and with how many women, he might not have been so receptive to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this story. However, he brought Fayette into the room. Unlettered as he was, the sergeant seemed to possess an instinctive understanding of how to accomplish results by playing one personality against another.

He bade Roelke start over again after Fayette entered, and Roelke told a story which impressed Mulcahy favorably.

Of course Fayette protested that it actually had been Roelke he saw outside the Lakelands office after its lights went out. But Mulcahy made him admit finally that he was some distance away. Also, Fayette was so frankly antagonistic to Roelke—even a stranger could put a finger accurately on the weak spot in his character. In addition, there was the testimony of Guide Dunnigan that he had seen no one. So in the end the sergeant began to discount Fayette's original story.

A knock at the door interrupted this train of thought.

Roelke had just said, "The band still was playing at midnight, and I listened till it was through. So how could this hot-dog merchant have seen me?"

Naturally Fayette was angry at being termed a hot-dog merchant. He objected violently while Mulcahy answered the door. The desk sergeant stood there.

"How about some real news on this murder case?" he asked, and offered Mulcahy the two newspapers in his hand.

Day had broken, you see, and the final editions were coming off the presses. Mulcahy looked quickly through one paper, then turned to the other. He read thoroughly a long column upon its front page, re-read it, and examined a photograph or two carefully.

He looked hard then at both Fayette and Roelke.

The desk sergeant rapped again. "Lady to see you, Sarge," he said affably. "I never see such a popular man with the women."

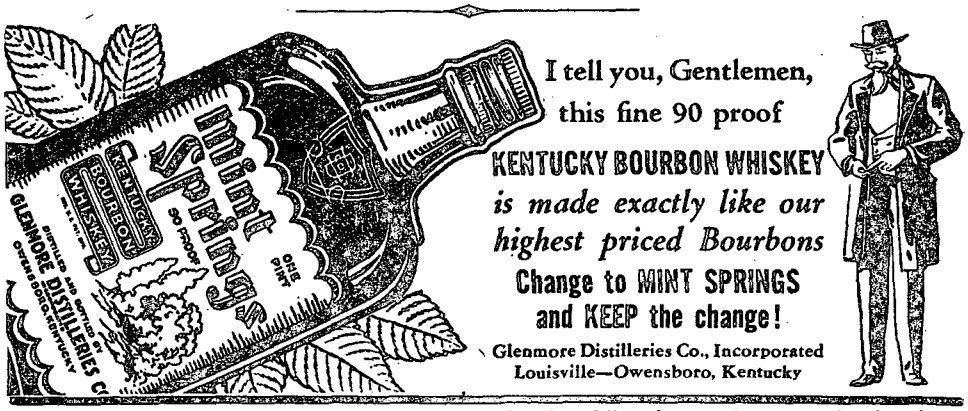
When Mulcahy returned in ten minutes, the two suspects, as he called them, were quarrelling violently.

"Shut up and listen to me," Mulcahy told them. He still carried the newspaper. "I'm going to hold you, Fayette, as a material witness. If you want bond, you'll have to fix it up with the magistrate."

Undoubtedly Roelke looked relieved, but his expression changed instantly. Mulcahy had picked up the topcoat that lay across the Lakelands official's lap, and was scowling at the spot where its button was gone.

"You, Roelke," Mulcahy said, "I'm going to hold, too. Charge is murder."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK



This advertisement is not intended to offer alcoholic beverages for sale or delivery in any state or community where the advertising, sale or use thereof is unlawful.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Reef

By JOHN EARL DAVIS

THERE can be no doubt whatever about what happened. You can see the shabby brick tenement, just off First Avenue, where Carl Tempest lived. You can still go out on the crumbling old dock at the end of Forty-eighth Street—if the city hasn't demolished it—and look up the East River to Welfare Island and that bare pile of rocks where the terror left him.

* * *

From seven in the morning until six in the evening, Carl Tempest picked up new padlocks, looked at them, and threw them down. If they passed specifications, he threw them into one box; if not—into the other. For these services he received fifteen dollars a week, which he brought home to the dirty tenement just off First Avenue and gave to Bella. Bella had been pretty once; but she had washed herself out in the same tub with the everlasting laundry. Spirit had been diluted to slavery; love to acceptance. The color of her face, the softness of her hands had gone down the drain. Her hair fell into strings, which got into her eyes when she scrubbed. Carl saw that, but was too weary to care much. Bella has always been a good wife. She cooked for him, and they lived.

The only thing that really came up in that last month was that Carl got a little more restless. Maybe it was the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

damp heat that came about then, making their back room intolerable. You sat on the one cane chair, and it stuck to you. The bed was a tumbled mess of hot rags. Through the court window came the smell of what the neighbors were having to eat; and it turned your stomach. When you ever did get to sleep, you dreamed of padlocks with faces, spitting at you while you inspected them.

When Carl couldn't sleep at all, he got up and dressed and went for a walk. It seemed natural, then, to go down toward the river. After midnight the traffic thinned out on First Avenue, and the roar was stilled a little. If you went west, you got into the dreary caverns under the elevated; north took you past delicatessen shops, south past the slaughter houses, now dull with sleep. But the river, even if it stank a little, was alive and cool. You could sit on the end of a rotten old pier, and nobody would bother you. It would be a little world all your own; and maybe after a while you'd feel like going back home to bed.

Carl found the dock at the end of Forty-eighth Street—decaying, barred to all traffic, and carrying warning signs to keep off. Heedless—at first—of those warnings, he would slip through the bars and go to the very end, where black water gently slapped the piles. Sometimes a tug or an oil boat would go by, plodding on some errand that couldn't wait for another day. Once or twice an excursion steamer dawdled past, spangled with electric bulbs, crawling with forms which must have been people dancing. You knew that for sure when you heard the music floating at you from that direction, swelling louder when the wind happened to be right; dying out entirely when it didn't.

CARL loved to watch boats; loved to think about them sometimes when he was working—because his work was automatic anyway, and independent of thought. But often at such times would come a dull, foolish little ache, and the strangely insistent memory of a boat he had made, years ago.

He had labored over it with clumsy but eager hands, because it was a kind of symbol. The other boys who swam off the pier with him brought tiny fleets down to the river, where they showed them proudly for a day or two: cigar boxes, pointed blocks of wood, even fancy toy yachts and steamers, fished out of junk heaps. Some floated, some capsized; but in time each of them drifted away and was forgotten.

Carl said, "My boat is going to be different. It's going to be real—not just a piece of wood that floats." So he gathered scraps wherever he could find them—whatever could be turned to use; he studied pictures of ocean liners, and slowly built his model. It took a long time. When he was finished, he knew that he had done a good job; nothing had ever looked to him so beautiful. Proudly he gave it his own name, Tempest; proudly he carried it to the pier for launching. "Watch this," he told the others. Gallantly the *Tempest* moved away from the pier, pausing an instant like any fine lady waiting to be admired. Then an undercurrent took her and she raced; and Carl, watching her, knew for a moment the ecstasy of creation fulfilled.

Only for a moment. Then he saw her prow headed straight for a reef—a pile of rock close inshore. The current was mad. Before Carl could get to her she had crashed, faltered, capsized. A sudden eddy took her under. Seconds later her keel showed, a little speck heading

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

down-river toward the bay; then a launch went by to starboard, and blotted her out.

It wasn't so much that the boys had laughed at him then. The thing went deeper, because it crystallized every boyhood failure he had ever known. It left, somewhere inside him, a dark core of hopelessness and fear; a kind of tacit assurance that whatever he planned or hoped was doomed from the beginning. That distrust had grown up with him; came back to him now, as he remembered the *Tempest*. Nothing, he reflected, had ever gone right with him, either before or since.

There was another result. Though boats still fascinated him, he feared them—or rather feared for them. It almost seemed that the thing which had dragged him down had dragged his boat down also; and he dreaded that thing. Once, when we was courting Bella, they had taken an excursion to Coney Island; and he had been frightened and unhappy all the way. Anything, he thought, might happen. After that he did not go on the water any more.

Yet now, these hot summer nights, he was down at the river again, watching boats, thinking of things that lay beyond his grasp. He sprawled on the dock, forgetting, for a little while, the sticky room, the rinse-water eyes and rough red hands of Bella. Up to his left he could see the southern tip of Welfare Island, and below that the tiny islet of rock masses where the gulls liked to rest. Something about those rocks made him shudder. Nothing he could see or understand; just a nameless dread. They were too stark, too heavy, those rocks. They could crush a man; or a man could be crushed on them—as the little *Tempest* was crushed. Sometimes he had to turn and look the other way; then he felt a menace at his back. This grew. This was part of the restlessness that came upon him in that last month.

ONE night he asked Bella to take a walk with him. Vaguely, he may have wanted to have her share this new experience of his—the silence, the river smell, the boats slipping by in the night. Or again, there was the possibility that her presence there, her unimaginative comments on what she saw, could help to dispel the growing feeling about those rocks. For thought of them was mingling now with thought of boats—in his work, in his dreams. Those cold stones took on a kind of collective personality. Sooner or later, in some way, they would get him.

Of this he did not speak to Bella at all. He simply asked her to go for a little walk. At first she refused, because the request seemed incredible, irrelevant, and silly; he had not suggested such a thing in years. And she was tired, and hadn't any decent clothes. Where would they go? But at last she gave in, and Carl took her down to the river. Nervously he tried to draw her attention from the signs that said, "Warning. Keep Off"; for they were beginning to have a significance which he did not wish to examine.

He felt a kind of elation at having her there on the dock—his dock. For a moment it brought a little surge of forgotten feeling; and surprisingly, he reached for her hand. It was rough. She drew it away, shivering a little. "This is a terrible place," she said. "I'd rather be home. Anything could happen to you down here."

A flanking warehouse draped them with a sullen blanket of shadow. Out in mid-channel, a tug hastened north with the incoming tide. Its thick-bearded

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

prow seemed headed straight for the clump of rocks below Welfare Island. It must strike; nothing could stop it now. Carl took a deep breath, yelled, "Hey!" But by then the tug had passed safely by, yards this side of the rocks. Things get out of perspective when you're looking over the water. Carl felt a little foolish; but he was strangely afraid, too. He had tried to cheat the rocks. They would not forget that.

Bella turned back, whining. "Carl Tempest, what's got into you, yelling like that? Are you going crazy? This is a terrible place you brought me to." He never took her down there again after that.

But now he faced a new struggle every night. The river was still beautiful, peaceful, cool; it was better than being at work, or at home. But the river held a threat: Bella had crystallized it, in a way, when she had said, "Anything could happen to you down here." She had meant, probably, that you could be slugged, or robbed, or arrested; or that you might fall through a rotten plank and drown—something tangible like that. But Carl knew better. There was something waiting down there for him, that had nothing to do with any of these possibilities. A penalty that he would have to pay, sooner or later, for the little hours of escape that the river afforded him.

Of course he didn't put it in those words. He only knew that when he went down among the coal lighters at night he was getting away from the things that made him tired and unhappy. The roar from the bridge at Fifty-Ninth Street was faint and soothing when it reached him. Even the tall red Socony sign, over in Queens, had a kind of impersonal beauty which the dark river liked and reflected. . . . But against these things he had to weigh the insubstantial shadows which crept closer to him, nightly, from the rocks. His place, like Bella's, was at home. Anything could happen to him here. That phrase grew into suspicion, and the suspicion into a secret terror. And the colder that terror sat in his heart, the tighter those bonds became which drew him to the lonely dock. The peace disappeared from there; more and more he returned out of an unwilling defiance, as when a man continues to shout at a brute antagonist though he knows it would be wiser to turn and run.

THE last night was not in its beginnings any different from the rest. Oh, it was his birthday—his twenty-fifth. At twenty-five a man is young, full of hope and courage; the whole world is in his pocket. So Carl addressed himself, and then laughed with a deep, abiding bitterness. No, nothing happened that day, any more than what happened every day: feeding, drudgery, feeding. After supper he read the paper for a little while, said, "Be seeing you," to Bella and then walked down to the river.

He leaned against a splintered pile at the end of the dock, steadfastly shutting out all thought. But something whispered outside the portals of his brain. Slowly, slowly, tight strong wires pulled at his eyes. Look up—upriver. Look. You have to look. . . . Well, there was nothing to see. Only a pile of rocks, sticking out of the river where they didn't belong. They were eloquently silent. Look here. You cannot look anywhere else. Your wife is at home. That is the place to be. Maybe it is not too late to go there.

Happy birthday, Carl Tempest. Something went wrong twenty-five

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

years ago. Look, Carl; look here, and try to think what it was.

There was a chill wind off the East River, making not a ripple on the water's surface. Carl pressed his palms flat against the weathered timbers beneath him, clamped his teeth, and turned his face toward Queens. Then he relaxed, and drew in a long, deep breath at what he saw.

It had not been there a moment before; he could have sworn to that. A giant liner, glowing and proud—the most beautiful thing, surely, that he had ever seen. Pure white she was, from sharp bow to graceful stern; even her funnels were white against the shadowy background of Queens. And high up above the funnels was a soft glowing whiteness which seemed like a reflection of the boat herself—warmer and more delicate than any cloud.

She lay quite still on the still river. She was mammoth and high—so high that a man standing in her bow might grow dizzy on looking down. The sheer line of the prow—Carl shook his head, dug his fingers into the rotting planks. The ship was reeling; no, the ship was quiet, and he was reeling. But he knew what he had seen. The prow was pointing straight at—was even touching—that stark little island of rock. The ship was a finger, directed to those dark threats that worked with him, ate with him, slept with him. He wanted to leave; struggled, even, to turn; but he was fixed there, cold and helpless and rigid.

And now the thing came which no one could have foreseen. Surely Bella, pale, stringy-haired Cassandra, conjured up no such fantastic nightmare when she said, "Anything could happen to you down here." But she spoke dreadful truth.

As Carl Tempest fought against the inflexible bonds twisted about him by the shadows, he looked and saw a thick, flat shaft of light extending to him from the liner's promenade deck. He closed his eyes and opened them again. It was still there. His gaze was fixed on it without thought of volition. He forgot his bonds; and in forgetting them, lost them. Suddenly, without reason, he put out his hand and touched the light. It was substantial. At the first quick touch he jerked his hand away, recoiling from the material cold softness of what had no right to solidity at all. The thing glowed with a luminosity that had in it nothing of heat. It was susceptible of measure. Carl found himself estimating its breadth as about four feet, its thickness as perhaps six inches. Like a sturdy plank. And it was just long enough to extend from the gleaming vessel to the dock on which he sat. It rested firmly there, waiting. . . .

The thought came over Carl that it was waiting for him. For the moment he did not try to explain otherwise this gangplank of light, or to understand how it came there. So with the ship: it did not seem to him at all strange that she should appear thus resplendent in the East River; though surely there was here no place for such a craft to dock. She was simply there, a token of luxury, romance, elegance—everything to which he would never have access. Yet she stood there now in mid-river, incredibly beautiful, provocative, inviting; and he had but to walk aboard.

Stiffly he rose, placed a tentative foot on the beam. It held. The ugly dead end of a street, the blank frowning warehouses had disappeared. Only there was one brief flash of thought for Bella. She should be here. She

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

would like to see this too. Twenty-fifth birthday party, together. Then he shrugged, set his face toward the goal, and began deliberately to cross the beam.

He must have realized, later, the awful significance of that moment when he thought of Bella. If he had turned back for her then, with one foot yet on the honest commonplace grime of the dock, he might still be inspecting padlocks; might still be coming home for meals, reading the paper, giving his socks to Bella to wash and darn. There might be blood that nourished and a brain that thought, where now is only the everlasting vacuum of terror.

As he walked his step was springy and his feet sank a little, as in thick moss. Already he felt the luxury that waited for him aboard the huge glowing liner. But, with what was pleasurable, he felt also a vague uneasiness. He tried to define it as worry over the fact that he was an interloper—in short, that he would be kicked off as having no right on the ship. But that wouldn't do. He was not timid by nature, nor did he mind a rebuff. He had had too many of them. Now, as his steps slowed, he came to understand that something was definitely wrong. His throat felt tight and dry. He licked his lips; found them dry, too.

He had avoided looking down at the river; but the soft springiness of the light beneath his feet began flashing chill misgivings to his brain. It was not like moss after all; rather, he thought, like tender human flesh—yielding, recoiling. And, like flesh, this substance was alive; it moved, not in any direction but with a fierce bumping swirl that he could feel through his shoes. The sensation made his own skin crawl.

And yet it seemed that he had known the sensation before.

HE KNEW that he was terribly afraid. Somewhere out of the past came an absurd memory, an admonition to conquer fear by examining its object. He shuddered. There was something beneath him too awful to look at; yet he had to see it if he was to go on. Not to know would turn him into a gibbering maniac. He believed that; and believing, he knelt, the sweat starting from his forehead—knelt, and steadied himself on the beam, and looked.

At first he could not be sure. To credit his eyes would be madness; but to admit hallucination—that would be madness, too. In this seething mass on which he knelt he saw, animate and corporeal, the secret terrible fears of his own soul.

In terror he rose, turned back toward shore, began a step—and suddenly shrank, retreated. It was all but too late. His foot would have gone down into a black void where the river waited. Between him and the shore there was nothing—not even a glimmer on the unrippled water. The gangplank ended at precisely the spot where he stood. He was trapped.

Surely, he thought, he must be dreaming. He had heard of such dreams. He would yawn—so—and turn easily, and will to cast off sleep. He would reach out, and touch Bella, and so return to the cluttered little apartment where a pack of cigarettes lay always by the bed. He would smoke, and try to forget this hideous nonsense.

And so he turned slowly, and saw the ship. It was very real—more real, because he was nearer to it. The gangplank stretched ahead—from here to there. His feet sank a little in the turmoil of despair that swirled beneath them. He screamed and ran, bounding sickeningly over the glowing path,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trying to run out of the dream; and at the last step fell, not far but hard, face down on the deck. In this there was no physical pain, no sensation, even. As if the body were already—

He shuddered, and pulled himself upright against the rail. The gangplank was gone. With his last running step they had dropped away, those scurrying, desperately searching, utterly hopeless lives. The millions of hideous, tortured reflections of himself. His road back to the safe, heavy commonplaces of life—gone!

Yet for a moment, looking out over the water, he had one last access of dull calm. It was strange, he thought, that everything should be as before: the river; a tug with a string of barges; the dirty warehouses, and the lights of Manhattan beyond. Not far past those docks would be First Avenue, and the shabby brick tenement where Bella waited. Alone—and on his birthday.

He started suddenly.

An ominous shiver ran the length of the vessel. Carl held himself very still, grasping the rail, waiting. There was no sound anywhere behind him. Waves of silence engulfed him, weighed him down with sinister, creeping apprehension. Little by little it came to him, the significant penultimate knowledge—there was no life on that boat. No one. Nothing. Only himself, trembling, desperately grasping the rail. And the last knowledge, the final stark domain of endless terror, was at his back.

Slowly—very slowly—he turned. The deck held beneath his feet, but the air had suddenly gone unspeakably cold. Fighting against the thing he must see, he remembered the rocks; rejected that thought, and could find no other. At last he faced the boat itself; at last, in a flash of searing, intolerable understanding, he knew. The boat was—

The *Tempest.*

The air had turned to liquid ice.

* * *

Tony Bellano was always better at everything than that little Casey mick. He got up very early in the morning to prove it; and this time he had something that would hit the ball. The sun wasn't quite up when he rousted out Casey and challenged him to a backstroke race as far as Gull Island—which is what the kids called that little bunch of rocks below Welfare. Casey gave him a good run for his money at that; and it was the mick who kept his head when they found the body lying there.

"Drowned like a rat," he announced calmly. "Must've fell off a boat or a dock or something, and got carried up here by the tide."

"Gosh," Tony muttered, looking the other way. "Gosh! We better swim back and get the cops."

It was as simple as that. While they were making tracks for the precinct station, Casey's mind was already on other matters. "Say, Bellano, did you see the pitcher in the tabloids yesterday of that swell liner that got sunk on its first trip out?"

"Yeah, sure." Tony was good at current events, too, and a little scornful of the mick's knowledge. "Sure, you dope. I suppose you think that just happened. Well, that ship sank just twenty-five years ago last night. Hit a reef, and went down with everybody on board, because the captain didn't take his wife's advice or something. The thing in the paper was about his wife just died."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Aw, I knew that," Casey protested. "Twenty-fifth anniversay of big disaster. Sure. But I forgot the ship's name."

He scratched his head.

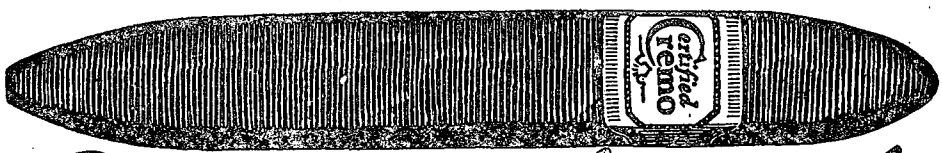
Tony saw a cop and hailed him; then answered the mick out of the corner of his mouth: "Screwy name for a boat. The *Tempest*. Kind of a jinx, huh?"

Mouse and Man

ALMOST as legendary as the friendship between Man and Dog, is the strife between Man and Mouse. For centuries this wily little rodent of the genus *mus musculus* has sabotaged the pantries and frightened the females of *homo sapiens*. It is no wonder that the sage Thoreau said that the world would beat a path to the door of the man who invented a better mousetrap.

Now Science has entered the fray and the conflict is resolved: Science vs. Mouse. Science plans to wipe all mice from the face of the earth with a perpetual motion trap. This is a diabolical device that is set by the first victimized mouse for the second—and so on. The first mouse sees a streamlined mousehole sprayed with an aroma of the finest cheese. Lured, Mr. Mouse enters a hall, hangs his hat and regards himself in a lighted mirror; and—being a mouse—thinks his reflection is another mouse. Believing it to be his host, and losing all caution, Mr. Mouse moves into a small room of mirrors, and, once he is inside, a grating drops behind him. The cheese, Mr. Mouse discovers, is in a glassed-in compartment and while the rodent is thinking this over another mouse drops in and another grating drops, and— Well—it's going to do away with mice, Science says.

—*George Preston*



America's biggest cigar value . . . SOLD AT SMALLEST PROFIT

Cremo CREAM O' THEM ALL 3 FOR 10¢

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MEN of DARING

Rescue

FIGHTING HUNGER, WOLVES AND ALASKA'S WORST ENEMY, THE ARCTIC BLIZZARD, ANDY BAHR FOUGHT HIS WAY 2,800 MILES ACROSS THE BARREN TUNDRAS, DRIVING 3000 REINDEER TO THE RESCUE OF STARVING ESKIMOS.

KUMIAK, LEADER OF THE STARVING ESKIMOS.

IN 1929 THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT LEARNED THAT A VILLAGE OF ESKIMOS ON THE ARCTIC SHORE OF HUDSON BAY WERE STARVING AND DECIDED TO SEND A HERD OF REINDEER TO THEM. ALASKANS SAID IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE. BUT THE GOVERNMENT ASKED THIS LITTLE LAPLANDER, KNOWN AS "THE BEST REINDEER MAN IN THE WORLD" TO DO THE JOB AND THE DRIVE WAS ON.

Andy Bahr!

FROM KOTZEBUE TO THE ARCTIC OCEAN—ACROSS A CONTINENT!

IT WAS HEART-BREAKING, MANY TIMES THE HERD STAMPEDED AND HE HAD TO BACK-TRACK MANY PRECIOUS MILES TO GATHER IT UP.

ONCE, WHILE HE WAS GOING THROUGH A FLAT ICE COUNTRY WITH NO MARKINGS, A BLIZZARD HID THE SKY. HE WAS 60 HOURS AFOOT TRYING TO REACH PROVISIONS!

HE EVEN OUTLASTED HIS ESKIMO HELPERS. THEY DIED! ANDY FINALLY STAGGERED INTO A TRADING POST.

HE STARTED WITH 3000 AND REACHED HIS GOAL WITH 2,370, FEW OF WHICH WERE ORIGINAL STARTERS. THE WOLVES GOT MANY, SOME RAN OFF WITH THE WILD CARIBOU. THE TREK LASTED OVER **FIVE YEARS!** NOW THE NORTH'S GREATEST DRAMA IS ENDED. ANDY IS BACK AT HOME CONTENT THAT HIS JOB WAS WELL DONE.

A True Story in Pictures Every Week

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Learn How to Stop an Ocean Liner In One Uneasy Lesson

By WESTON MARTYR

Little Man—What Next?

NOTWITHSTANDING the nonsense trumpeted about her by the publicity, the S. S. *Palatia* was undoubtedly an impressive job of work. She weighed fifty thousand tons, steamed thirty knots, housed as many people as a good-sized town; she was stuffed as full of machinery as a watch and it all ran as regularly and efficiently as a watch.

This should make it clear that the ship was one of man's major achievements and it therefore seems unnecessary to stress the trivial facts that she was commanded by a Knight Bachelor and contained a palm court with a chromium plated bar one hundred feet long, etc., etc., etc., etc. (see advertisements).

Rose Simmons sat in one of the palm court's brocaded chairs, with a trace of disillusionment and faint distaste showing in her eyes. These emotions were by no means induced by the blatant splendor of her surroundings, for all the luxury and splendor of it delighted her. No. Rose's eyes were fixed upon her husband.

Albert Simmons caught his wife's look and understood its implications perfectly. Albert, in truth, did not shine in that elegant and palmy environment, and he knew it. He had no use for that kind of environment and he did not care if he shone in it or not. But he did care, greatly, whether or not he shone in Rose's eyes. Her look hurt him, made him think.

Albert was one of those meek-looking, sandy, raw-boned little men who blush

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when a woman looks at them, and who seldom have occasion to blush twice on that account. In other words, Albert was the type no woman looks at twice. He was also the type no man monkeys with once, if he be wise and understands that appearances are deceptive—especially the appearance of meekness in a pair of very cold, very pale eyes.

It is easy to explain why Albert had married Rose. She was the blond, Junoesque sort of girl who attracts small virile men as cream does cats; and Albert worshipped Rose and thirsted to make her his from the moment he set eyes on her.

It is not so easy to explain why Rose had married Albert, which she did to the fully expressed surprise of all her relations and of that swift little set of near-successful theater people she ran around with in London. Rose had been the belle of the little East Anglian town of her origin. She could have had her pick of any of the men there. But she had preferred a career. She had done chorus bits, understudied an ingénue rôle which she never had the chance to play, and done a small part in one of the touring companies of a year-old London success. She could have had her pick, also, of several dozen men she had met during those two tyro years. Or she could have gone on with the small career which was beginning to show promise. But —she had married Albert.

When her most insistent suitor—the assistant stage manager of the touring company, who was a bright young lad with a jutting jaw and a good deal of promise—had implored her to tell him, "Why, oh why, Rose? To throw yourself away on that—" she had not been able to answer him, herself.

"That little runt of an outsider," he had gone on fiercely, in response to her vexing silence, "whom nobody knows, and the Lord alone can guess where he comes from, and he must be twice your age and if it were anyone but you, Rose, I'd say it's his damned money that's done it. . . . Oh, Rose —Rose."

But the young man was quite wrong. It was not Albert's money that had done it. It was Albert. He wanted Rose badly, and whenever he had wanted anything badly before, he made adequate arrangements to get it. So he made adequate arrangements to get Rose.

One of his arrangements was this honeymoon trip on the *Palatia*. He knew he would hate it; but he also knew that, to Rose a round-the-world cruise in the world's most luxurious cruising liner would prove a captivating prospect.

SO ALFRED captured Rose. But do not despise her. Rose was a nice girl, and she would never have married Alfred simply because he could afford to provide her with such things as luxury cruises. No There was something about Alfred—some quality which her other young men entirely lacked—which made Rose like Alfred, in spite of the little man's meek and unornamental appearance.

Everything is relative, particularly appearances. Alfred, in his office or foundry or machine shop, looked boss of the job. Alfred, bombing a trench in Flanders, looked so much like certain death that brave men had cowered at the sight and held their hands up in terror and supplication. Alfred, surrounded by the polished, gay and ultra-fashionable crowd in the *Palatia's* palm court, looked insignificant and inferior. And Rose felt ashamed of him and looked it. And Alfred noticed that look.

It was Alfred's habit to think a lot before he said anything, so he did not say anything. But Rose said, "Alfred, I don't think you go to a very good tailor. Just look at the cut of Mr. Russell's dress clothes. How smartly his coat comes in at the waist; and the graceful drape of his trousers. Surely you could afford to go to as good a tailor as Mr. Russell. Your coat —well, I must say it, Alfred. It's awful. And the way you let your trousers get baggy at the knees . . ."

Alfred gazed at Mr. Russell, weighed him up and found him wanting. "Very pretty; but not my line," he said. "He's no good."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No good!" cried Rose. "Why, Alfred, that's Ronny Russell, the great tennis player. They say he's going on the films."

"Suit him better," observed Alfred. "Softer job."

Rose said, "I believe you're jealous, Alfred. I was thrilled when he came and spoke to us in the smoking room, and I could have cried when he went off because you were so curt with him. And now we're talking about it, Alfred, I do wish you could be more easy and polite. I think most of these people are very nice, and I know they're ready to make friends with me—us; but, somehow, you seem to put them off. That nice Professor James, for instance, who sits at our table. He's a most interesting and distinguished man and I was getting on so well with him at lunch. And then you grunted, most rudely I thought, at something he was saying, and he gave you such a look it made me blush. And I saw you blush, too. And then he practically turned his back on us, and he's cut me dead since. Why must you be so rude, Alfred?"

"Sorry," Alfred mumbled. "The idiot said men were slaves of their machines. But I make machines. I drive 'em. So I had to grunt."

"Well, why just grunt?" cried Rose. "It sounds so—so ineffective. You ought to speak up for yourself and assert yourself, Alfred. The way you behave, you make these people despise you. If you knew about machinery and disagreed with the professor's views, why didn't you discuss it with him like an intelligent and civilized human being? That's the worst of you, Alfred: you never *say* anything. You won't talk; not even to me, hardly. Why, you've never told me till now that your business is making machinery!"

"Didn't think you'd be interested," Alfred murmured. "If you'd like to hear—Gosh! Who's this?"

ALFRED rose and his face turned red as he observed Mrs. Wedderburn bearing down upon them. Mrs. Wedderburn nodded to Alfred and smiled sweetly at Rose. "I wonder if you'd care to play a rubber of bridge?" said she.

Rose said, "How nice. We'd be delighted."

Alfred mumbled, "Sorry. Don't play. Think I'll have a look round on deck."

As Alfred ambled away, Mrs. Wedderburn smiled again at Rose and said "Good. As a matter of fact we only need one to make up our four, and no doubt your husband will be much happier—" She waved Alfred out of her mind and, with the same gesture, introduced Rose to her party. Rose spent a happy evening and lost twenty-five dollars. Alfred spent an interesting evening and acquired knowledge, poking unobtrusively about those parts of the ship which bore such legends as, *Crew only* and *Passengers not allowed on this deck.*

He returned to his cabin after midnight and found Rose half asleep in her bunk. Rose said, "Oh, Alfred. Where have you been? I was getting quite anxious about you. What *have* you got on your hands?"

Alfred said, "Rust. I've been thinking about what you said, Rose. I mean about me not talking or telling you anything. Well, I'll talk. About the things I know. Don't think they'll interest you. I've been looking at this ship. She's a big box of tricks. Very big. Very tricky. She's solid with machines and pipes and wires, from deck to keel and from bow to stern. The men who run her know their work. It's just as well. This ship's no job for a crew of girl-babies."

Rose smiled at Alfred. "How very interesting, dear," she said.

"Yes," said Alfred. "It can be. You know what an anchor is? Well, this ship's got two working anchors. They weigh about eight tons each and they're shackled to a hundred and twenty fathoms of heavy stud-link cable. And the inboard end of each cable is fastened to the ship's bottom framing. If you were to let go an anchor, now, and didn't check it with the windlass brake, it would run its chain right out, because the water's over a thousand fathoms deep here and the ship's steaming full

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

speed, anyway. And, if the chain didn't carry away, which I don't think it would, its weight and momentum would tear out the frame it's fastened to, and the frame would tear out the skin plating *it's* fastened to, and all of this ship forward of her fore bulkhead would fill up with water."

"Oh, Alfred," said Rose. "It sounds very dangerous. Could it happen? Would the ship sink?"

"Not by accident," Alfred answered. "And she'd only sink a few inches by the head, if the fore bulkhead's sound. Don't let it frighten you. Before you can let one of this ship's anchors go, you've got to open the cable compressor and ease off the windlass brake. The compressor's fastened to the deck, between the anchor and the windlass and the cable passes through it. You open the compressor by raising a lever. And at sea in this ship the lever's lashed down, just in case of accidents. To release the brake on the windlass, all you've got to do is to turn a handle. And they don't keep a man on look-out on this ship's fo'c's'le head. They do that job from the crow's nest up the foremast."

Rose lay back on her pillows and gave a little sigh. "Sure I'm not boring you?" Alfred asked.

"It *is* rather technical," Rose answered, firmly stifling a yawn. "But it's frightfully interesting, dear. Just fancy if an anchor did slip. I'd no idea you knew so much about these queer things, Alfred."

"Nothing queer about 'em," said Alfred. "Just common engineering practice. What is a bit queer, though, if you come to think of it, is the way this ship's steered. Nobody steers her. There's no hand at her wheel. It's all done by machines. A gyroscope controls the steering gear on the bridge and that controls the steering engine which turns the ship's rudder. And it's rummy to see that engine, working away right aft, under the poop, all by itself, without anyone attending to it. I've just been looking at it. The engine's geared to the rudder head and its gear wheels turn the rudder and stop and turn it back again just enough to keep the ship straight on her course. It looks rummy, and I expect it'ud make that professor chap at our table talk a lot of rot, if he saw that machine, working itself, and steering the ship straighter than a man can. But I could make a machine like that myself—and break it, too, if I thought it was making a slave of me. Rats!"

ALFRED looked at his dirty hands and turned to the washbasin. Rose smiled to herself at the little man's pathetic efforts to make interesting conversation. Then she shut her eyes and pretended to be asleep, in case Alfred decided to go on boring her with any more of his dull and technical details.

"The main switch-board in this ship," went on Alfred, "is just inside the door of the engine-room casing on E deck. It's a poor place for it. If some fool passenger were to start fiddling with it, he could get hurt, besides putting all the lighting in the ship out of action."

Rose gave a little snore. But she miscalculated. It was such a little one that Alfred did not hear it.

"I saw that chap Russell just now, up on the boat deck," he continued. "He had a girl with him, and they were sitting on the canvas cover on the outboard side of one of the lifeboats. That's a good place, all right, if you don't want anyone to see you; but if the ship gave an extra bit of a roll, you'd be apt to slide off there and drop overboard. And the ship's propellers project well out from her side, so anything that falls overboard and doesn't float gets drawn in by the propeller suction and minced up small. If you lowered a rope overboard with a weight on it, you'd see what I mean. There's a couple of mooring wires, two inches in diameter, wound on drums on the after end of the fo'c's'le, and if anyone—"

Rose gave a weary yawn that put a full stop to Alfred's discourse. "I'm sorry, dear," she said. "But it's so late. And I'm so tired. Don't you think it's time we went to sleep?"

Alfred switched off the light. . . .

At breakfast next morning, Rose was

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

humiliated to observe that the professor had secured a seat at another table. In the smoking room before lunch, Mr. Russell delighted Rose by offering her a cocktail. But when he saw Alfred approaching, Mr. Russell said, "Oh, Lord! I forgot. I've got a date with the—er—purser. D'you mind? We'll have our drink together some other time."

After dinner, Mrs. Wedderburn so pointedly omitted Alfred from her invitation to play bridge, that Rose would have refused had not Alfred insisted. "Suits me nicely," said he. "You play. I'll take a look round on deck." He promptly vanished.

A LITTLE before midnight all the lights in the *Palatia* went out. And stayed out.

"Bother," said Mrs. Wedderburn. "I was just going to trump your king."

Professor James made a pronouncement. "Something has gone wrong with the dynamo," he said.

Mr. Russell flicked on his cigarette lighter and held it over his head. "Let there be light," said he. And there was laughter.

A voice from the crow's-nest wailed into the night, "Masthead and side lights gone out, sir."

The officer on watch answered from the bridge, "All right!" he shouted. "Quartermaster! Get the oil lamps. Binnacle first, then the navigation lights. Don't forget the stern light. Slap it about, now." He shone a torch on the steering compass and found the ship was four points off her course and still swinging. "Gosh!" he said. "Power's off, too. Watch on deck! You there, bo's'n? Rush the hands to the after wheelhouse and put her into hand steering-gear. Boy! Call the captain."

The sound of men running in the dark is a first-class panic-breeder. The bo's'n led his men aft by the quickest route, via the promenade deck, past the open doors of the smoking room. The noise of their trampling feet died out and was followed by dead silence. Then Rose heard the professor say sharply, "Something's up!"

The ship began to tremble throughout all her great bulk and from forward came a rumble and a roar. The *Palatia* shuddered. She seemed to trip over something and stumble. She gave a jerk and a hiccough and her engines suddenly stopped. Then everything grew very still and silent.

Mrs. Wedderburn was the first to break silence. She cried out, "Oh, oh! Turn on the light. The light! The light! *Please* turn on the light." And suddenly Mrs. Wedderburn was screaming. Then it seemed to Rose that a lot of people were screaming. A panting man ran into her and nearly knocked her down. She clutched him and he pushed her violently away, shouting, "Here! I don't like this. Let me out. Let me *out*." And, in spite of a high, falsetto note in it that she had never heard before, Rose recognized the voice of Mr. Russell.

Rose got knocked down in the scramble to get through the smoking-room doors. Being a woman of sense and not wishing to be trampled on, she crawled under a table.

Two minutes later, Alfred found her

Many Never Suspect Cause Of Backaches

This Old Treatment Often Brings Happy Relief

Many sufferers relieve nagging backache quickly, once they discover that the real cause of their trouble may be tired kidneys.

The kidneys are Nature's chief way of taking the excess acids and waste out of the blood. Most people pass about 3 pints a day or about 3 pounds of waste.

Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning shows there may be something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

An excess of acids or poisons in your blood, when due to functional kidney disorders, may be the cause of nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness.

Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, used successfully by millions for over 40 years. They give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there. He held a torch to her face and, "I say, Rose," he said, "You aren't hurt, are you?"

He lifted her up and sat her on the table, and Rose realized for the first time that her small husband was a strong man.

"Oh, Alfred!" she cried, "What's happened? Is the ship sinking? What shall we do?"

Alfred said, "Sinking, my foot! Everything's all right. Nothing's happened that need worry you, anyway. If I'd known *you* were going to get scared— Here! Come down to our cabin, and you make yourself easy, and I'll tell you exactly what's happened. It's all *right*."

WHEN Alfred got Rose to their cabin, he said, "There now. We'd be fine if only I'd remembered we'd need a candle. And a drop of brandy would set you up nicely; but I don't suppose I could get hold of any now, with everyone rushing round like a lot of silly sheep. So you'd better turn in and listen to me while I make your mind easy. What's happened is this. Somebody took a steel hatch-batten off a bunker hatch on E deck and dropped it on the main switchboard by the door in the engine-room casing I was telling you about last night. He dropped the thing on the two terminals where it would do the most good and fused the whole box of tricks. That's why the lights are out. Then the chap went aft and put a steel belaying pin in the gears of the steering engine, and the engine tried to chew the pin up and bust itself. That engine won't steer this ship again till they get it ashore to a machine shop, if then."

Alfred felt Rose give a start, and Rose heard Alfred chuckle.

"When all hands came running aft," went on Alfred, "to see what was up with the steering gear, the chap slipped forward to the fo'c's'le head and let go both anchors with a run. The cables ran right out to the bitter ends and, judging by the tilt on this cabin floor, they've snatched out a bit of the ship's shell plating and let some of the North Atlantic into her forepeak. Then the main engines brought up with a round turn, because someone led the ends of two 2-inch mooring wires overboard and let 'em run off their drums until the propellers fouled 'em."

Rose caught her breath sharply and stared into the dark at the dim shape of her husband.

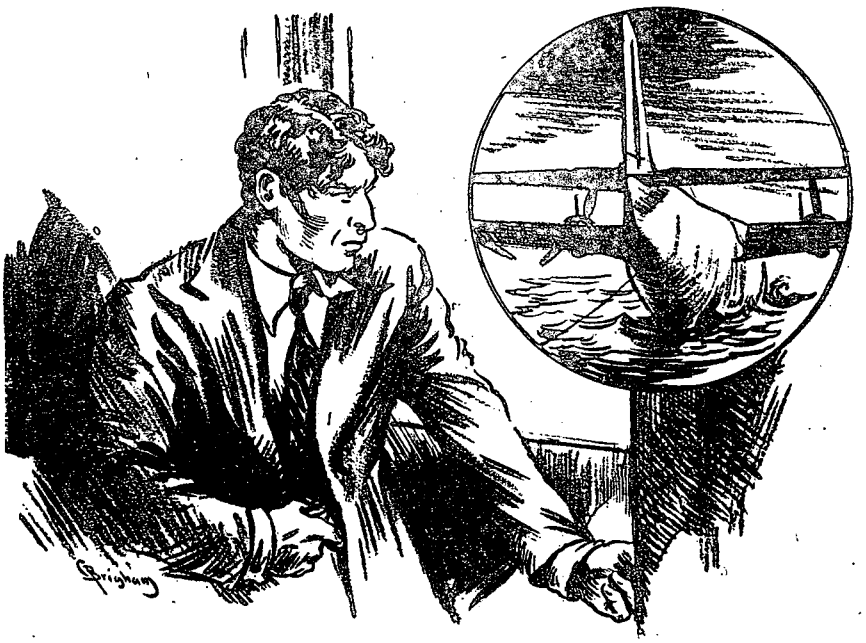
Alfred stood up. "So you see, Rose," he added, "There's nothing for you to worry about. This ship's as safe as houses, only she can't steam and she can't steer. Somebody's put her out of business, pro tem. But, as soon as they get the wireless working, we'll have every ship within range offering us a tow into port. This puts the lid on our round-the-world cruise, of course; and I hope you don't mind, but I, personally, was beginning to feel I'd had all the cruising I needed."

Alfred heard Rose gasp in the dark. He felt the clutch of her hands on his shoulders and he heard her cry, "Alfred! Is *that* what you did it for?"

"No," Alfred answered. "That's just a —er—useful by-product. The reason this ship's out of action is . . . Well, Rose, you were beginning to think that your old man, compared to a chap like that Russell, was a bit of a rabbit. And I couldn't have that, Rose! And presently I shall have to go to the captain and tell him how simple it is to disable his precious ship—and how very terrible it would be if someone really dangerous had done all those things—" He smiled. "But I'm not a dangerous man, Rose. I'm a very simple, ordinary sort of fellow, really."

There was silence in the Simmons cabin for quite a little while. It was dark in there, and Rose was looking at a light that dazzled her. But when Rose could see clearly, something happened to Alfred that had never happened to him in all his life before. A woman threw her arms around him and kissed him passionately on the mouth.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Loot Below

By EUSTACE L. ADAMS

THE giant *European Cruiser,* built by the Trans-Caribbean Airways as the first unit of a passenger fleet to fly the Atlantic, is given a test run from Miami to Buenos Aires. She carries forty prominent passengers and a crew of ten. On the way from Buenos Aires to Trinidad four men passengers, acting in well-drilled unison, take over the airship. With casual brutality they murder Captain MacFarland and all of his crew but three—Williams, a pilot; Toby Bronson, purser; and Segurdo, Latin steward.

The members of this fantastic band of air pirates are all ex-employees of Trans-Caribbean. Their ringleader, "the Chief," has remained ashore and has succeeded in extorting two million dollars from Jarratt, president of Trans-Caribbean, by telling him that he will never see the *Cruiser* again unless he pays. The Chief has met Garland, manager of the Miami terminal and a pilot, Hewett, on the Tamiami Trail. Taking the two suitcases of ransom money from them, the Chief drives off into the Everglades and boards his own seaplane, anchored in a bayou. As his radioman contacts the pirate crew aboard the *Cruiser,* the Chief tells his pilot that it has taken him a year of planning and a hundred thousand dollars in cash to consummate his scheme of piracy. Then the seaplane heads out into the Atlantic, following the *Cruiser,* for a rendezvous on the open sea. Voss, leader of the four who have taken possession of the *European Cruiser,* in an effort to get Bronson to open the safe, burns the purser's foot with a cigar lighter. Bronson faints and is carried to the cabin of Ann Hall, heiress passenger.

AS MYSTERIES within the mystery we have this same Ann Hall and a Mr. Crouch, another passenger. They are playing some deep game. And so are Rosita Alvarez and Commander Halsey of the United States Navy. He is attaché of the embassy in a certain South American country and carries documents of vital importance. Rosita, a sultry beauty, seems to be a lady-of-fortune whose charms are fatal—not to say mercenary. Pilot Williams is pretty fond of her, just as Toby Bronson is beginning to find himself falling for Ann Hall. Ann binds Toby's horribly burned foot and the purser has just regained consciousness when Roope, pale-eyed gunman of the pirates, enters the cabin. His idea seems to be homicide, with Bronson as the victim and then a dash of love-making with Ann in the receiving role. But Segurdo, faithful steward, enters the cabin behind Roope. Noiselessly he pulls a knife. He and Roope die together, one from

This serial began in the Argosy for December 11

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the knife and one from a shot from the gun.

Meanwhile, ashore, the press of the land—in spite of Trans-Caribbean's efforts toward suppression—breaks the story. The papers haven't all the facts, but their banner lines scream that the greatest airship of all time, the *European Cruiser*, has disappeared. And while newsprint startles the nation the *Cruiser* has landed on the rough bosom of the open Atlantic. She tilts to the swells while her pirate crew await the arrival of the Chief, and her passengers await a fate that is still in limbo. . . .

CHAPTER XV

. . . AND THE SEA RECEIVES

"I SUPPOSE," said Commander Halsey in a flat, dead voice, "they've ransacked my cabin, too."

Rosita Alvarez regarded the naval attaché without enthusiasm. He was not a pretty sight. The bloody bandage which covered most of his face had been knocked askew and all of his features that Rosita could see were swelling and turning purple.

"Have you any more important papers they could steal?" she asked, not even attempting to mask the downbearing contempt in her voice.

"Listen, Rosita," he said, desperately. "I was carrying those papers in the safest place there was, right in my inside pocket. If it hadn't been for this hold-up, nobody in the world could have taken them away from me. But who'd have figured on a thing like this?"

"You have to sleep at night, don't you?" she asked.

"Every night I've turned that envelope over to a Trans-Caribbean Hotel manager, and I've watched him put it in the safe."

Halsey turned his desperate eyes away from her and looked down at the floor. The bandits, on their compartment-by-compartment search of the *European Cruiser*, had rifled the room, and had done a complete job of it. The floor was littered with personal belongings.

Dessar had opened Rosita's luggage and pulled everything out while Voss had watched. The steward, his dark eyes mutely apologetic, had stood by with the pillow-slip. And Roope, deadly as a tarantula, had waited at the door, guns carefully covering the naval offic Dessar had pried open Rosita's jewel cas To Halsey's surprise, it had yielded a fin haul. Several good rings, three valuable bracelets and a necklace that had made Voss' eyes sparkle. Into the pillow-slip they had gone.

"It pains me to accept that large diamond, Rosita, my sweet," Voss had said, grinning. "I remember it well. On Obispo Street, in Havana, Hank MacFarland picked it out, and I was with him at the time. But business is business."

White-faced but quiet, Rosita looked at the other bandits.

"Hear that—you who think you are friends of his?" she said. "His friends today, shark-food tonight—and he has your valuables. Business is business."

Voss laughed at that. He took two quiet steps toward Rosita and slapped her face. That had been too much for Commander Halsey. He pushed himself off the divan, but Voss was expecting something of the sort. Spinning on his heel, Voss slammed him savagely in the face before the naval officer had half-risen to his feet. Halsey rolled off the divan to the floor. He tried to get up, but Roope, moving in from the doorway, clipped him with the flat of his gun. Halsey, on his hands and knees waited, head hanging down, for strength to return to him.

"Be still," Rosita told him.

At a nod from Voss, Segurdo gathered the opening of the pillow-slip together. He went out into the passageway, closely followed by Dessar. Roope covered Voss' exit. The leader stopped at the threshold.

"Rosita, my sweet—" he began.

But Rosita cut him off short. "If I were *your* sweet," she said, "I would lose no time in running a knife into my heart."

"It would be a pity," he said, "to do that. Perhaps you are bluffing. I think," he added, slowly, meaningly, "that before this little episode is closed, I shall call your bluff. Meanwhile your door shall remain unlocked. The passengers may now

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

where they please, so long as they stay on this deck and behave themselves."

WITH THAT, Voss had led the others aft along the passageway, ransacking each compartment as they went. Halsey got to his feet and sat on the divan, holding his head. In sultry silence they listened to fruitless protests from passengers as the bandits invaded their compartments and took their valuables. But that was almost the only sound within the huge body of the ship. After a while Voss and the rest marched forward past the open door. Segurdo's pillow-slip was very heavy. It bulged as he carried it slung over his shoulder. Roope with his two guns, was last in that grim little procession. He glanced into the room and the cold, colorless thrust of his eyes made Rosita shiver, although the late sun was slanting down with tropic fervor upon the metal hull of the great flying boat.

Halsey turned harassed eyes upon Rosita. "I don't believe he has it," he groaned.

"Who has what?" she asked.

"The envelope. I don't believe Voss took it."

She shrugged her graceful shoulders. "How would I know?" she asked. "If he didn't, who did?"

His face suddenly hardened. "Did you?" he demanded, bluntly.

She stare at him, her dark eyes widening. "Didn't you see Voss take everything I owned—" she demanded, pointing at the floor, "and throw it down there, piece by piece? Did I take it? What would I take it for? Money? Was there money in it?"

"No," he confessed. "Just some papers." But he still eyed her suspiciously. "It's funny, the things that Voss said to you."

"I laugh with you," she said, unsmilingly. She bent forward, suddenly, *"Chico,"* she snapped, "your country made a mistake, trusting its valuable papers to you. Your ambassador—did he not know that of late you have been drinking too much—been casting your eyes at too many lovely ladies?"

He flushed angrily. "Perhaps you'll tell me how you happened to know that?" he said, almost in a snarl. "I never saw you in my life until we got aboard this plane. How do you know so much about me?"

"Oh, I get around," she murmured, and seemed to lose interest. Then, carelessly, "Maybe you lost that paper in your own compartment."

"No," he said.

"How can you be so sure of anything?" she asked.

He pushed himself to his feet, stormed angrily out of the room. She rose, stretched like a cat, lazily. She cast a single glance at the half-rolled window curtain, then followed him across the passageway to compartment H. He twisted the knob of the door and pushed his way in. She, moving gracefully, not seeming to hurry, was right behind him.

"Listen," he said to J. Hamilton Crouch, who was on his feet, staring at him, "did you find an envelope around here that had red seals and—" His words came to a quick stop as he saw another man in the room, a compactly-built young man clad in the blue-and-white uniform of Trans-Caribbean. He stared hard at the gold wings embroidered on the blue-double-breasted coat, and his voice became savage. "Where the hell did you come from?" he said.

Billy Williams flushed darkly at the tone of his voice. He looked the naval officer up and down with cold dislike.

"I came from the bridge," he said, crisply, "and since you're asking, where the hell did you come from? Isn't this your compartment?"

"A fine crew!" Halsey flamed. "Ten of you, weren't there? And you let three or four men take your ship away from you!"

Billy Williams moved a step closer to the commander. "And you are a Commander in the United States Navy, aren't you? There were about forty passengers on this deck, including ten or fifteen men. You, as a naval officer, took charge and drove away the lone gunman who went through here, didn't you? I hope you'll be

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

recommended for the Congressional Medal of Honor."

THEIR tempers were both ragged; the things that had happened to them had outraged them beyond all reasoning. And between them lay the invisible shadow of a girl.

Recklessly they drove on.

"I don't take talk like that from anybody," Halsey said, his voice suddenly level and dangerous.

"You're taking it from me," Billy Williams said, flatly.

"Oh, stop it, you fools!" Rosita cried, and pushed her way between them. Her voice, soft with its Spanish inflections, calmed them. She stood facing Halsey, shaming him with the fire in her dark eyes. "Haven't we troubles enough, *caballeros*, without this?"

And Crouch, who had been standing aside, watching the two with a cynical smile on his heavy face, chose to help Rosita.

"You say you lost an envelope, Commander?" he asked. "Did you lose it in here?"

"I—I don't know," Halsey said, jerking his angry gaze away from Williams. "All I know is, I lost it."

"I have not seen it," Crouch said in a regretful way. "I did not even see those hold-up men take it. And, as you see, they did not miss much."

With a sweep of his thick arm, he indicated the room, which was a shambles. His luggage, and Halsey's, had been opened and everything thrown in a crumpled mass on the floor.

"I'm afraid," he said to Halsey, "that if you had anything of value in your luggage, they have it. They even took my signet ring and my cigarette case, to say nothing of my wallet. I shall have to cable for funds from Trinidad, if we ever get there."

And all the time he was talking to Halsey, he was looking steadily at Rosita, whose dark eyes had already inspected him with minute care.

"What did you say your name, *caballero?*" she asked him.

"Crouch. J. Hamilton Crouch," he said, clicking his heels and bowing, as a very stout man does—with effort.

She drew a sudden breath, let it out slowly. "A type," she murmured.

The heavy lids of his eyes dropped. "A type?" he asked politely.

But she had lost interest in him. She had turned and was walking out of the room. Crouch stopped her. He pulled a business card out of his vest pocket and presented it to her with another bow. She glanced at it and slipped it into her dress.

"Pretty raw!" Williams blazed. "I guess the skipper was right."

Rosita looked at him. "How was he right?" she asked.

"He said you never brought any luck to anybody!"

Every bit of color left her smoothly-rounded cheeks. "I guess," she said, slowly, "that he *was* right. But I wish he had not said it. Now he will never have a chance to *un*-say it!"

Commander Halsey shuffled his feet impatiently. "What *is* all this mystery?" he snapped. "And what's it got to do with my lost envelope? I'm going to—"

But what Halsey intended to say was never known. For that instant a scream came tearing down the passageway from the after end of the plane. It was a girl's scream, its overtones vibrant with horror! And an instant later came a deeper, hoarser scream—the last cry of a man in the agony of violent death.

IN THREE fast steps Billy Williams was at the door. Commander Halsey was almost there; Billy shouldered him out of the way and got through first. The obese Crouch was on Halsey's heels as the three men raced aft along the corridor to the open door of the de luxe cabin.

Others had heard those horrible cries. Frightened faces were peering out of doors as passengers, their nerves almost paralyzed by all the things that had happened to them, wanted to know who had

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

screamed, and why, but dared not go to find out.

Williams careened into the de luxe compartment and came to an abrupt stop. The others stopped beside him, staring unbelievingly at the picture before them.

Two men lay there, Segurdo and Roope. The steward was already dead; he lay with that final flatness that is peculiar to dead men. But there was still a little life in Roope. A little, but it was going out with the blood that ran from his split throat. His left hand was tapping feebly on the carpet and his pale eyes were rolling. Death with Roope was hideous.

Above the two on the floor stood Toby Bronson. He was looking incredulously down at them, and not doing a thing, but just standing and looking. Against the bulkhead, her slender back turned to the room, stood Ann Hall. She had stopped screaming, and was standing, shuddering, her face in her hands.

For a moment there was silence. Then Toby Bronson shook his head, as if to shut out of his mind some memory too horrible to bear. He bent over and picked up a gun that was on the floor only a foot or so from Segurdo's body. Then he rummaged under Roope's coat, and pulled another gun out of the dying man's shoulder holster. It stuck a little as he got it out of the coat. A long shudder ran over Roope's body. His thin figure went rigid. Then relaxed and did not move again.

J. Hamilton Crouch leaped forward. He reached for one of the guns in Toby Bronson's hands.

"I'll take that," he said, crisply.

Toby jerked the gun out of his grip.

"The hell you will!" he snarled in a voice totally unlike his own. His eyes ran across Rosita's white face, across Commander Halsey's and came to a stop on the grim visage of Billy Williams. "Come here, Williams," he said, forgetting that the other, by virtue of his position as second pilot, was now acting captain of the ship. "You and I'll be needing these."

Commander Halsey started as if someone had kicked him. He put one big hand around Billy Williams's arm and pulled him to a stop. He stepped forward.

"Look here," he said, firmly, "I'm a commander in the United States Navy. Give me one of those—"

"You'd lose it," Toby cracked at him. "Get out of the way."

He took a couple of steps forward and passed one of the guns to Williams, who was moving in, his eyes very ugly as they struck at J. Hamilton Crouch. The pilot smiled thinly and fondled the heavy weapon in his hand.

"Let's go places," he said to Toby.

"Okay," Toby agreed.

AS THE two started toward the door Ann Hall, who had turned away from the bulkhead and now stood watching them, wailed, "Aren't you going to do anything with them?" She pointed a shaking finger at the two bodies. "Are you going to leave them here?"

And Commander Halsey looked closely at J. Hamilton Crouch. "I don't like you," he said, "and I don't trust you. But I know you've been around. What can these kids do to recapture the ship? What do they know about fighting?"

A smile touched across Crouch's lips. "I get you," he said, crisply. He swung his heavy body toward Toby. "I told you once. I'll have that gun."

But Toby wasn't even listening. "Billy," he said, "let's do something with these. The emergency door on the starboard side?"

"So I have to get tough?" Crouch said.

He reached forward so swiftly that Toby was unprepared. He got his hand around the automatic and gave it so vicious a twist that he jerked it out of Toby's hand. But now it was his turn to be unprepared. Toby straightened up and stared at him.

"Put that back in my hand," he said, very quietly.

Crouch hardly glanced at him. He was looking down at the weapon in his hand.

"Look out, Crouch!" snapped Commander Halsey.

He was too late, by the hundredth part

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of a second. Toby took a single limping step forward. Speed flowed through his muscles. His right fist started at his knees and curved upward in a streak of light. His fist smashed into Crouch's face and drove the man's head back. He felt Crouch's lips and teeth give under his bare knuckles and then Crouch buckled. He tottered, slumped forward to his hands and knees.

"No!" Billy Williams snapped at Commander Halsey, whose weight swayed forward to the balls of his feet. The pilot aimed his pistol straight at the officer's stomach. "Stop bothering us."

Toby turned and met Halsey's furious glare.

"Listen, you," he said, grimly. "Ashore you may rank high, and this guy on the floor may, too. But on this plane you're just a couple of passengers who are making damned nuisances of yourselves." Deliberately he turned his back to the naval attaché.

He glanced down at the two bodies, then at Billy Williams.

"What'll we do with them?" he asked in a troubled voice.

Williams took a long breath. "No telling how long we'll be here," he murmured. "And down in these waters it gets pretty hot."

"Oh!" Ann Hall moaned, and Rosita turned her dark eyes away.

Crouch pushed himself to a sitting position and spat blood upon the already stained carpet. He put a thumb and forefinger to his pulpy mouth and flicked away a broken tooth.

He began to curse in a low mechanical tone, staring at them with bloodshot, baleful eyes.

Toby and Billy lifted the inert body of Roope from the floor and lugged it to an emergency exit, cunningly concealed in the panelling on the starboard side. Toby opened the door. Together, they flung the gunman's body into the sea. Then they went back and got Segurdo.

"Sorry, old timer," Toby muttered, as they swung his body out.

CHAPTER XVI

TWO CHIEFS SPEAK

THE sun had dived into the indigo water of Mona Passage like a falling fireball. Shadows chased themselves across the lush green valleys of Haiti, climbed the mountains, drew with them a purple blanket which enveloped the land. The feeble white flash from the skeleton tower of Cabra Island was just visible below and beyond the right wing tip of the droning seaplane, and a cluster of tiny lights beyond indicated the town of Monte Cristi, sprawled in its mudflats a mile in from the beach. Beyond the port wing and ahead, beyond the invisible arc of the whirling propeller, lay nothing but mountains, with no possible emergency landing place this side of the Caribbean.

The man called the Chief yawned as he got up out of the chair in which he had been napping. He glanced out of the windows and caught one last glimpse of the mountains before darkness smothered them. He spotted the sprinkled lights of the town of Monte Cristi, marked the white flash of the beacon. He looked at his watch and an expression of satisfaction crossed his face.

He walked over to the radio set, where Ryszka sat intent upon his instruments. He touched Ryszka on the shoulder. The man started violently, looked up, then slipped one phone from his ears. The Chief made a stabbing, downward motion with his finger.

"Those lights," said he, "ought to be Monte Cristi."

"They are Monte Cristi," said the mechanic. "We have made up twelve and a half minutes of our lost time."

"Thirteen minutes," the Chief corrected him. "Is there any news?"

"Plenty" said Ryszka. "The cat's out of the bag. I just got a press-radio bulletin out of Miami. It didn't say much except the *European Cruiser* was missing and that a Coast Guard cutter was heading out of Puerto Rico to look for it. The line's statement said the cruiser made a forced

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

landing on account of engine trouble and that no alarm was felt. But look, Chief, the code stuff that's been coming in would fry your ear drums. Trans-Caribbean at Miami told its representative at Port of Spain, Trinidad, that some of its officials were starting right away in the *Pacific Cruiser,* and to be ready for them about six o'clock tomorrow morning."

"At six tomorrow morning," the Chief declared, "we shall have made our rendezvous, transferred Voss and the rest, together with what loot they have, and be aboard our yacht, a hundred miles off Paramaribo."

"Yes, sir. And listen, sir, there's a hell of a lot of stuff going through that sounds to me like the Navy five-letter secret code."

"No doubt," the Chief said, glancing without much interest at a sheet of paper upon which the operator had copied nearly a page of meaningless words, all five letters long. "The aircraft carrier, *Ranger,* was to pass eastward through the Panama Canal this afternoon. I learned that by cable this morning. Undoubtedly she is proceeding at forced draught toward Trinidad now. But at very best she could not get any of her planes to Trinidad before five o'clock tomorrow afternoon. I took all that into my calculations. And so far as searching surface vessels are concerned—or even any planes that Trans-Caribbean might be able to turn off their runs and throw into the area this afternoon—all of them will look to the westward of the *European Cruiser's* route, not to the eastward. When they have not found her on the direct line of her regular flight, they will believe that she veered away toward land, not toward the open South Atlantic."

He cradled his bulky-splinted finger in the palm of his other hand and frowned as the movement brought pain to his entire arm. His face hardened and his eyes—which Garland and the chief pilot of Trans-Caribbean had at first thought so mild—were now fierce and malefic.

"I don't like pain," he said. "The thought of being killed leaves me unmoved. But I don't like pain. Never did. Ryszka, I heard the bones crack when that rat bent my finger back! And will they pay for that!"

THE operator opened his lips to speak, but saw the look on the Chief's face and changed his mind. He had learned some months ago, during rehearsals of this job, that the man who resembled a small-town lawyer or doctor could fly into a killing rage. He could still see the expression on Lefty Isaac's face when the Chief had shot him three times in the belly the day Lefty had gotten drunk and had taken a poke at the Chief's chin. Also Ryszka could still see how lumpy and horrible looking the sack had been when he and Roope and Voss had buried Lefty behind the practice barn in Suffolk County.

"I estimate," the Chief said, his paroxysm of rage having passed, "that it will be at least tomorrow afternoon—perhaps the day after—before the widening circle of search will begin to move eastward of the *Cruiser's* regular line of flight. So if we keep strictly to schedule, we will be well in the clear. Have you everything ready?"

"Yes, sir," said the operator, relieved at the calmer note in the Chief's voice. "The Tommy guns are all loaded. The patent anchor is ready with plenty of line. The Very pistol is in its rack by the door, loaded with red cartridge. The collapsible rubber boat is over there, sir, together with its bottle of compressed air to inflate it with. The oars are on top of it. I've laid out four extra clips of bullets. And plenty of parachute flares."

"And the yacht?" the Chief asked.

Wordlessly Ryzska passed him a slip of paper upon which were two letters, several times repeated: O K O K O K O K.

"That came in exactly on time, and on her assigned frequency," the operator said, deep satisfaction in his voice.

"That means she has taken her position and is waiting for us," the Chief murmured.

For the first time he sounded really pleased. He went to the window and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

looked out into the night. He saw a single tiny light, fifteen thousand feet below, drift past as the speedy seaplane droned ahead on her southeasterly course across the island of Haiti. The potential menace of a forced landing simply did not occur to him, because it was not allowed for in the plans. Was there not a new engine in this plane, checked and double checked by expert mechanics during a 50-hour run on the test block? He had thought of everything, worked everything out on paper, timed everything to the split-second, counted upon the human equation and its frailities, so what could fail?

"I think," he said in a contented voice, "I shall indulge in exactly two ounces of scotch and take another nap. Compared to the planning of this undertaking, the commission of it is actually an anti-climax. It has been a wearying week."

"Okay, sir," said the operator, relieved. "I won't call you unless there's trouble."

Upon him the Chief bent a reproving glance. "What trouble could there possibly be?" he asked coldly.

"None, sir, of course," said the operator, and felt much better when the other curled up in a chair and fell instantly asleep.

A CHARTERED transport plane came into the Miami Municipal Airport low and fast, its two exhaust pipes flinging twin streamers of yellow-and-crimson flame behind. A group of eight or ten newspaper reporters who had somehow gained news of its coming, were disappointed to see it slap wheels to earth not in front of the administration building, but far over on the south side of the field.

As they ran across the tarmac toward it, the plane taxied swiftly to the southeastern corner, where its pilot slammed on the brakes with a jerk. The plane rolled to a stop directly beside a closed sedan which had been waiting there for some ten minutes. And long before the reporters and cameramen had crossed the field, a man had leaped from the cabin door into the motor car and was streaking toward the main gate.

Inside that darkened car, Mr. A. N. Jarratt, President of Trans-Caribbean Airways, turned a strained face toward the two men who had been sitting there, their faces hidden in the darkness.

"We wasted forty minutes at Charleston," he said. "Ceiling and visibility zero-zero. Any word from the *Cruiser?*"

"None, sir," said Jack Garland in a hopeless voice. "We've been double-crossed."

"And you gave the two million dollars to someone?" said the official, the faint hope in his voice sliding off.

"Yes. He gave us the pass-word. 'Two or nothing,' and we turned the suitcases over to him. He said in about two hours, we'd hear a report from the *Cruiser*. There's been nothing, not a damned thing."

"Two million gone, with nothing to show for it," said the president, in a stricken tone.

"Yeah," said Chief Pilot Hewett, dryly, "and Hank MacFarland, and the rest of his crew, and forty passengers—and a million dollar plane!"

"The newspapers broke the story in the final editions," said Garland.

"About the ransom?" demanded Mr. Jarratt.

"Not yet. They only said that the the plane's missing. And the trunk lines are almost blocked now with people telephoning down to ask where their friends and relatives are and what we're going to do about it. But the rest of the yarn will break soon—probably in the extras tonight. The reporters dug up some rumors about the banks sending us two million in cash and they'll probably manage to get all the dope within a few hours. The State Department is raising hell about some agent, or messenger, they have aboard the plane and they've asked both the Navy and the Coast Guard to get busy searching for the *Cruiser*. It's plain hell, what's going on. We have the *Pacific Cruiser* warming up on the runway. We're planning to make Trinidad in one jump, if it's all right with you. I'm going down myself, and so is Mr. Hewett, here. Okay?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Of course, and I'm going with you," said the president, his voice full of trouble. "Tell that driver to step on it. Before we take off, I want to telephone Washington. We've been doublecrossed, without a doubt, and I want to talk to the Department of Justice. I'll have to tell them the whole thing." He took a long, long breath. "If anybody but MacFarland had been in command of that ship, I'd wonder —I'd wonder—"

"If he had a hand in it?" Hewett snapped, finishing his sentence for him. "Listen, MacFarland is dead."

"Dead!" snapped the president in a shocked voice. "Where did you hear that? How do you—"

"I told you I used to fly with Hank MacFarland," the chief pilot retorted. "If he weren't dead, all the air pirates in God's green world couldn't keep that *Cruiser* from making port under her own power!"

"And if he's dead," said the official, slowly, "what do you think has happened to the passengers?"

"As long as any man in that crew is still alive—if any of them are—the passengers have a chance," said the chief pilot, with conviction. "I picked them myself, every man, right down to the purser and the two stewards. If that gang of men isn't okay, the whole personnel of the line is rotten to the core!" He leaned forward, his face working. "Driver, will you put this car into high gear? Did anyone confide to you that we are going to be two thousand miles away from here by breakfast time?"

CHAPTER XVII

LOOT AND LEAD

HUGO VOSS was a well satisfied man. Outside the portholes of the navigation and radio room it was pitch dark, but inside, it was light. Light enough for him to see what he was doing, and he was engaged in an exceedingly congenial task. Beside him on the floor lay dozens of limp and empty mail sacks, ravished of their contents, a large part of which, after having been discovered to be of no value, had been carelessly dumped out of a porthole. Before him, however, on the wide expanse of the chart table, were large piles of currency, securities and jewelry, all neatly sorted accordingly. Estimated conservatively—even remembering the discount on the jewelry which must be granted to a fence—the value of the loot was beyond Voss' wildest dreams.

"Look!" he breathed in an awed tone to Nitze, who was sitting on the floor before the safe, deftly chipping away at the lock with a cold chisel. "Who'd have thought that the registered mail would have held so many negotiable bonds? And the insured parcel post! Look at these pearls! This one string ought to bring twenty or twenty-five G's from any fence in the world."

He gloated over it a moment.

Nitze glanced at the clock. "I got to stop this for fifteen minutes, boss," he said. "Remember, the Chief, if he has to get a message through to us, sends it on the hour and half-hour. I got to listen."

"Well, hurry up," Voss said, reluctant to postpone the opening of the safe even by a few minutes. "And then get back to your chisel."

Nitze went over to the radio set, slipped the earphones over his head and pushed one away from his ear so he could hear what Voss was saying, yet miss nothing that might be coming through the ether. He flipped the switch, picked up a pencil and began to copy stray messages that cut through the frying of tropic static.

"Look," said Voss again. "Look at this stuff we frisked off the passengers!" He indicated a great heap of miscellaneous objects—cigarette cases, rings, bracelets, brooches, wrist-watches and the like. Beside it was a heap of bank and treasury notes, Brazilian, Argentinian, British and American, taken from the purses and pocket books of the passengers. Voss patted it with his fingers. "Twenty-three grand," he boasted, "right in that wad of money! Boy, is this a racket, is this a racket! It's so I can't believe I'm not dreaming. And to think I had to wait till

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I was forty-one years old before I met up with the Chief!"

"You think he'll get here on time?" Nitze asked, anxiously. "By the stuff that's coming in through these phones, they're raising plenty of hell about this plane being missing."

Voss' heavy figure stiffened. "What kind of stuff is coming in?" he demanded.

"Every couple of minutes I hear the words *European Cruiser,*" Nitze said. "There's a general alarm out for all ships to be on the lookout for us," he added.

"Oh, that," Voss said, carelessly. "I thought maybe they had talked about the two million smackers."

"No, they haven't said a word about that, yet," the operator-engineer said, "but —but—here's one; listen to this." He spelled the words out slowly, as the letters came through. 'T. P. Rogan, Trans-Caribbean Airways, Port of Spain, Trinidad. Taking off immediately for non-stop flight to Trinidad in *Pacific Cruiser*. Jarratt, president, Garland, division manager, aboard. Estimated arrival, six A.M. Have full complement gas, oil, medical supplies, doctor and nurse, waiting at landing. Signed, Hewett, Chief Pilot, Caribbean Division, Miami.' "

He broke off sharply.

"Hewett!" snarled Voss. "I'd like to get my hands on that—"

His words were blanked out by a sudden fusillade of shots from the bridge. Four or five shots, spaced so close together as to be almost instantaneous. The sound crashed in through the radio and navigation room, dinning heavily in that quiet compartment.

FOR only the smallest part of a second did that unexpected sound paralyze Voss' nerves and muscles. Then he swooped upon his gun which lay close to hand on the money-strewn chart table. Half a dozen leaping strides took him to the door of the black-painted bridge, where Dessar stood holding two still-smoking guns. An expression of complete incredulity was upon Dessar's face, and from his left sleeve slow drops of blood gathered and fell to the duralumin deck at his feet.

Voss snarled at him: "What happened?"

"I—I don't know," Dessar said, confusedly. "I was on watch here, and I happened to look out of the window a second to see if any ships were in sight. I heard footsteps on that stairway leading up from the anchor room. I thought it was Roope, of course, but it wasn't. It was that young purser guy. I let him have it and he shot back and he hit me in the arm and—"

There was a sharp tap at the metal flooring under their feet. Something whined upward, smacked at the shatter-proof glass roof overhead. Voss grabbed Dessar by the shoulder, hauled him into the navigation room just as another of those whining things bored through the floor and made a thousand tiny cracks in the glass canopy above.

"They're shooting up through the floor!" Dessar gasped. Then, in sudden fury, he bent over and aimed one of his automatics at the floor. "It works both ways!"

But Voss kicked his hand up. "You fool! Want to sink the whole ship? The duralumin sheets are so thin your bullet would go through the deck below and through the hull plates in the keel! It doesn't work both ways! Where's Roope?"

"I don't know, boss," Dessar said, starting violently as a third bullet came up through the flooring and splintered against the glass in the roof.

"The rat!" Voss snarled. "They must have gotten his guns away from him. And he said that's one thing no living man could do!" He spun around. "Nitze, come on. We've got to get those guys! Let's go, Dessar."

Treading carefully, as if they were walking on ice, the three bandits, each holding two guns, tiptoed across the metal deck of the bridge. There was this much to be said about Voss: he had courage. He led the way down the single flight to the anchor and gear room whose floor, on account of the upward sweep of the bow, was four or five feet higher than the passageway on the main deck. His heavy shoulders were

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

crouched forward. His knees were bent. He looked like a heavy-weight boxer moving toward a clever opponent. He did not seem to be pointing his two guns. Waist-high, they seemed to be moving of their own accord and leading him in the direction they were pointing. Behind him came Dessar and Nitze, in that order. Dessar's face was pale, but that was from the pain of the flesh wound on his arm. His face was the face of a fighting man. He kept licking his lips, and his eyes were avid. Nitze did not hang back, but it was obvious he had small liking for the job ahead.

There was nobody in the anchor room. Stepping carefully, Voss turned and moved down the half-flight giving onto the main deck. Instantly buzzing things came flying down the passageway, whizzing past his legs, as the rolling sound of pistol shots came down the corridor. He squatted suddenly to have a look and threw two quick shots at what he saw.

A man was peering around the edge of the door leading into compartment A, another from the galley. Just a portion of their faces could be seen, but the arms which projected from the doorway were in blue uniforms, and the guns were heavy automatics. These things he saw instantly and then the firing drove him back up the stairs. He stood at the bulkhead which separated the anchor room from compartment A, stared at it a moment, then fired a ranging shot obliquely downward through that thin metal partition. But a bullet plunging back through the bulkhead showed him his shot had been wasted.

"Up," he said, and led the way to the bridge deck.

Silently Dessar and Nitze followed. A bullet drilled a hole through the flooring of the bridge as they crossed on the way to the navigation room.

"I don't like 'em coming up like that," Dessar complained. And, in the navigation room he said, "Where's Roope?"

"Don't know," Voss snapped. And sidestepped quickly as another bullet searched upward through the flooring there. "Get into the crews' quarters aft of the cargo hold. Bring out all the mattresses there are."

THEY brought out the mattresses they found, six of them. They stacked two, one on top of the other, in the bridge, and Dessar took his place there, guarding the stairway to the deck below. Two more they put in the doorway between bridge and navigation room. There Voss took his stand, where he could see everything. And at the radio table Nitze sat by his dials, two mattresses protecting him from drilling bullets.

"This is one thing the Chief, for all his brains, didn't figure on," said Dessar, with bitterness.

Voss gave him an ugly look. "What difference does it make?" he demanded. "He's got two millions in cash, hasn't he? And we've got all the loot from the ship right here, haven't we? We don't have to go below to keep the plane right here until he gets here. What can they do down there? They can't fly the plane, and they can't send out radio calls for help. All they can do is to wait and that'll get them lot, won't it? Nitze, find a soldering iron and begin putting those wires and bus bars back into the transmitter. When the Chief gets within sight of us, we'll cut down our output practically to nothing and tell him what's what."

Dessar peeled off his coat and shirt. He examined a ragged cut on the inner side of his left arm. "Narrow escape," he murmured. "Bandage this, will you, boss?"

Voss reached for the first-aid kit, "Nitze," he snapped. "Forget the radio. We can use a flash-light. Get busy on the safe. And while I think of it, louse, if it hadn't been for you, that purser would be lying right here instead of roaming around the ship with a gun. In your place, I'd hate to tell the Chief it was my fault all this happened."

Nitze turned somber eyes on Voss. Automatically picking up the hammer and cold chisel, he moved toward the safe.

"Hey, boss," Dessar said, "how are we going to get aboard the Chief's seaplane

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with all this loot while those babies below take pot shots at us—and we in a collapsible boat?"

Voss' savage gaze broke away from Nitze's preoccupied figure. "A cinch," he said. "A couple of dozen shots, fired straight down through this deck, will fix everything."

"You mean to shoot holes in the bottom of the hull?" Dessar asked.

"Yeah. And when the water begins to creep over the floor of the main deck, those mugs down there are going to lose interest in shooting at us in the rubber boat."

"That'll sink the ship!" Nitze gasped. And, when the boss made no answer, he cried: "You mean that you'd let the water fill up the lower deck and drown all those—"

"What else would I mean?"

"Even all the women?" Nitze persisted.

Inch by inch Voss' hairy hand crept toward the gun that was on his knee. Then, remembering that the safe must be opened, he pulled the hand away.

"Get busy on that safe, Nitze," he commanded in a voice that was surprisingly soft. "I was just kidding about sinking this plane. You know I wouldn't do a thing like that."

For the space of a dozen heart-beats Nitze's troubled eyes searched those of his boss. Then, shrugging faintly, he turned back to his work and began steadily to hammer at his cold chisel.

Breath blew quietly from between Voss' lips. He pulled his head around and met Dessar's stare. Expressively Dessar lifted his shaggy brows. Voss reached down and patted the gun on his right knee. Dessar nodded emphatically.

CHAPTER XVIII

DESERTER

TOBY BRONSON came limping out from behind the door of compartment A. He stood at the entrance to the anchor and gear room, listening intently. He thought he heard the retreating bandits crossing the floor of the bridge, directly above his head. He guessed where the passageway would be up there and he sent a shot drilling through the ceiling.

Billy Williams, grinning happily, came out of the galley. He blew down the barrel of his still-hot gun. He had time, now, really to look at Toby. A blood-stained bandage on his head, his blue uniform coat and white duck trousers smeared crimson from collar to heel, one foot swathed in bandages—Toby was a sight.

"What the well-dressed purser should wear," Billy Williams said, drily. "Think we crocked any of them there in the anchor room?"

"No. All I could see was feet until Voss played squat-tag there on the stairs. I'm sure I missed him, and you did, too."

His expression was savage as he listened carefully, trying to place the bandits above by the sound of their feet on the bridge deck. He aimed where he thought the door between bridge and navigation room should be and gave them another shot.

Billy regarded the round bullet hole with dissatisfaction.

"These decks and bulkheads," he said, "are as bullet-proof as tissue paper. We ought to herd all the passengers out of the forward compartments. Get them as far aft, at least, as the dining lounge. Then, if fighting starts again—"

"*If* fighting starts?" Toby echoed grimly.

"All right, have it your way," sighed the pilot. "*When* fighting starts again, bullets are likely to be ripping through these bulkheads right merrily."

"Go move them back," Toby said. "I don't do any more walking than I can help. My foot hurts like hell. I'll stay here and guard the stairway while you herd them aft."

"I guess I'll hang around, too," Billy said, soberly. "You go hog-wild when there's any fighting and you need somebody to take care of you. If I hadn't trailed along after you a while ago, you'd have stormed the bridge all alone and eaten more lead than was good for you. When will you learn that one man with one gun can't

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

outshoot three men with two guns apiece? Not unless he is a trained gun-fighter, or all shot with luck. If I hadn't hauled you off those stairs, you'd be dancing the Big Apple with Roope and Segurdo and the sharks right now."

"I've never been in a gun fight before," Toby said, defensively. "I thought we were doing all right."

"And you didn't see Voss and that other egg come rolling out of the navigation room?"

"Sure, I saw them."

"Nerts!" Billy said, with feeling. "Listen, if I take the walking off your feet by moving the passengers aft, will you promise me you won't take one step up toward the bridge?"

"I don't step anywhere if I can help it," Toby said, glumly, looking down at his throbbing foot.

"Here," Billy said, handing his gun to Toby. "I won't need this until I get back. And if you need one gun while I'm gone, you'll probably be needing two."

Doubtfully Toby accepted the second automatic. When Billy had hurried aft along the passageway, he pulled out the galley stool lately occupied by the happily-defunct Roope. He placed it so he could face the short stairs leading up to the anchor and gear room. He sat down and waited. And now and then, just to show those bandits that somebody was on the job, he lifted his gun and sent a bullet ripping up into the bridge and into the nagivation room.

SOME minutes later—he had completely lost track of time since noon—he heard quiet footsteps behind him. He swung around in his chair, every nerve alert. It was Ann Hall. Without a word of explanation she sat down on the floor beside him. And there she was, not doing anything, not saying anything, but just sitting. He knew perfectly well that he ought to command her to get back to her compartment. This would be a tough place for her to be if those birds from the bridge made another attack on the main deck. But even while he was thinking this, he knew it was nice, having her here.

"Are—are we going to live through this?" she asked, quietly.

"Why, sure," he said.

"Just to pass away the time," he said, "how would it be for you to tell me why, of all the guys in the world, you'd pick one like Crouch to marry?"

It was some time before she spoke. Then, in a voice so low Toby had to bend his face close to her fragrant hair to catch what she was saying:

"I was visiting my brother Arthur in Buenos Aires," she said. "He knew Hamilton Crouch; I think he was doing some kind of business for Mr. Crouch, and I think it was some kind of business Arthur wasn't proud of. He was hanging around a German crowd all the time and—"

"A German crowd?" Toby repeated.

Something was tugging at the strings of his memory. It seemed to him this might have some connection with something important, but so many thing had happened in the past few hours that things were all mixed up inside his head.

Ann nodded. "Arthur isn't—isn't—well, he hasn't turned out very well and Dad sent him to Buenos Aires to take charge of the South American branch of the Hall Radio Company. Really, the sales manager is in charge, but that doesn't matter. Well, Arthur introduced me to Mr. Crouch. I didn't like him very much, but Arthur begged me to be nice to him. And then—and then one night, it was two weeks ago, they came to my hotel room and it seems that—that Arthur killed a man while he was drunk. And it seems, too, that Mr. Crouch was the only witness, and—and—"

Anger began to throb in Toby. "I get it," he snapped. "If you'd marry this Crouch, he'd testify it was self-defense, huh?"

"Something like that," the girl admitted.

"Didn't you cable your father? With his money and influence he could get the State Department into the thing and—"

"And he'd never speak to Arthur again in his life," the girl said. "This was to have been Arthur's last chance."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yeah, and isn't Arthur the nice lad to let you stick your chin out like that?"

"He's my brother just the same."

"And you're going through with this?" Tony demanded. "Aren't you going to tell your father that you made a promise and—"

"I've got to go through with it," the girl said. "This noon I lost my nerve. That's why I just wanted to disappear at Trinidad, and catch a steamer there for Europe, or somewhere. But I don't believe I'd have backed out in the end. A promise is a promise."

"Here," Toby said, passing her the gun Billy had left with him. "If those gunmen should come down and get me, use this—and don't hesitate one minute."

Doubtfully she accepted the gun.

"So he blackmailed you into promising you'd marry him, did he?" Toby said, his mind veering back to the subject at hand. "Will I give him a going over before this business is through!"

"Will you give who a going over?" asked a cold voice directly behind him.

And before Toby could even turn his head, a strong arm encircled his neck, jerked him backward off his stool and, as he went crashing to the floor, the automatic was yanked out of his hand.

"All right," snarled J. Hamilton Crouch, his face contorted to a fat and sweaty mask of fury, "start giving me the going over!"

MEANWHILE Hugo Voss glanced at his watch for the twentieth time in the past hour. He glared at Nitze, who was still squatting before the safe, chipping patiently at the tough metal with his hammer and cold chisel.

"How much longer is that going to take?" Voss snarled.

"Half an hour—maybe a little longer," said the engineer, not even looking around.

"The Chief is due here at any minute," Voss rasped. "If you delay him, put him off schedule, I'd hate to be in your boots."

"I hate being in my boots anyway," Nitze said, quietly, still tapping on the chisel.

Dessar's head came around and his gaze met Voss' in a meaningful stare. Then Dessar lifted a pair of binoculars from its rack and searched the blackness of the northwestern sea and sky. His figure suddenly stiffened. He thumbed the focussing wheel and bent forward.

"Boss, I see a light!"

Voss yanked the glasses out of his hands and put them to his eyes. "That's it!" he crowed. "A flare! But it's so far away it looks just like a pinpoint! Watch that stairway in case those babies make a rush."

He wheeled away, stepped to a shelf where a Very pistol lay ready beside a dozen-odd red cartridges. He grabbed up the thick-barreled pistol, stuffed the cartridges in his pocket and raced up the flight of stairs to the catwalk in the wing. Amidships was the glassed-in navigation turret. A ladder with three steps led upto the navigator's seat. Standing upon this seat Voss twirled two butterfly nuts and lifted a section of the glass. With his head and shoulders out in the night air, Voss raised the Very pistol straight up in the air and sent a red rocket soaring high into the darkness. He refilled the pistol, waited two minutes by his radium-painted wrist watch and pulled the trigger again. This time he was rewarded by the sight of an infinitesimal red dot flickering in the sky to the northwestward.

"There's nobody—nobody in the world—like the Chief," he murmured to himself.

He waited exactly one hundred and twenty seconds more and then fired his Very pistol once more. Instantly he was rewarded by seeing a crimson ball of fire float down from the sky very much nearer than the first.

Then, and not until then, did he scurry down out of the navigation turret. He was grinning as his feet met the catwalk of the wing and his triumphant eyes glanced along the brilliantly-lighted, odd-shaped interior with its silent engines and its catwalk narrowing on each side to nothing at all.

He raced down the duralumin steps to the navigation room. He tossed the Very pistol back on the shelf.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It's the Chief!" he cried to Dessar, who had the binoculars to his eyes. "He'll be here in a—" And suddenly his words broke off. His glance had strayed to the safe. "Nitze!" he called in a queer voice. There was no reply. Nitze was no longer crouching by the safe, no longer cutting away the steel from around the combination lock. "Dessar! Where's Nitze?"

Instantly the binoculars came away from Dessar's eyes.

"Isn't he there?" Dessar asked.

VOSS spun on his heel and galloped heavily into the cargo hold. Under the bright glare from the drop light the boxes and packages were neatly stacked against the walls and bulkheads, but there was no sign of the missing mechanic. In the next compartment, the rifled mail room, there was only litter; Nitze was not there. Into the crews' quarters Voss raced, but that room was a mess. The cots, naked-looking without their mattresses, and with only their springs showing, stood in abandoned silence. Blankets and sheets and pillows were all over the floor, but Voss spared no glance upon them. He hurried across the floor to the small door opening into the baggage room, a low-ceilinged place filled with luggage. And even as he looked anxiously within, he became aware of a drumming sound from outside, carried and transmitted by the arched ceiling.

"Nitze!" he called.

Back then, to the crews' room. Like a hunting dog he made straight for the door to the emergency ladder which led straight down to a locker-shaped cubicle on the main deck below. He reached for the knob and shook it. But the door was fast. Automatically his fingers groped for the key, which he remembered leaving in the lock. But there was no key there.

With cold fury in his heart he stamped back to the navigation room. The whole interior was now filled with the thunder from the low-flying plane outside. Glancing at the big window he saw the entire sea washed in a blinding incandescence.

"They're dropping flares and landing, boss!" Dessar called from the bridge. "Did you find Nitze?"

"No! You let him get away."

"*I* let him get away?" Dessar retorted. "You didn't say anything about guarding him. You told me yourself you were going to blow the back of his head in the minute we saw the Chief's plane!"

For the first time in the six months Dessar had known Hugo Voss, the boss looked actually frightened. He looked hurriedly out of the window and, dimly outlined in the blackness just above the tent-shaped incandescence from the parachute flare, he could see the gliding shape of the twin-pontooned monoplane coming down for its landing on the smooth surface of the sea. He darted for the radio set, then remembered he had countermanded his own orders and told Nitze to open the safe before soldering the cut wires of the transmitter.

A flashlight. Standard equipment called for one to be in its special rack over the engineer's instrument board. And there it was. He grabbed it. Hurrying out to the bridge, he heard the spanking noise made by the monoplane's pontoons as they touched the surface and clung. He peered into the outer darkness and saw feathers of flame streaming backward from the exhaust stacks, four or five hundred yards off the starboard side. He pushed the flashlight out of the sliding window, aimed the tube at the monoplane and began to press the switch, quick jabs for dots, longer pressures for dashes.

−.−. ....−. −− .− .. −. −−.. . −.−. −.−− .... . .−.. −.. −... −.−− .− .−. −− . −.. −.−. .−. . .−− −.−. .− .−. . ..−. ..− .−.. ...− −−− ... ...

For age-long moments the seaplane lay almost motionless in the yonder darkness, its exhaust flames dwindled to a thin flicker of redness. Then from the pilot's compartment came one dot of light, two dashes and a final dot.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stevens leaped up. "You framed this!" he shouted.

Too Big to Lick

By FRANK BUNCE

Shorty Eastman had two men to beat—a bigger man than he, and himself

BIG BILL STEVENS took his idle gaze sharply from the street as the door to the outer office of his modest suite swung open. He stiffened to a severe examination of a litter of papers on his desk, permitted himself to look up only when the voice of his visitor, outside, revealed his identity.

"Morning, Ella," the visitor was saying in the casual drawl that was as characteristic of him as a signature. But in spite of the drawl and his bluff at casualness, his voice had that warmth and intimacy of tone men reserve for only those women who seem to them supremely desirable. Stevens' brows pinched together in a black scowl.

The bright-haired girl at the typist's desk just within Stevens' range of vision permitted herself to look up. To anyone else it would have seemed that she was reluctant to have to interrupt her work, annoyed almost; but Stevens was not fooled. He knew how alert she was to welcome every other of his few callers; and her pretense at wanting to ignore this one had significance. Stevens understood women no better than the average man, which is to say he understood them hardly at all; but he did know that when a girl goes to a great deal of trouble to snub a man it is a reasonably safe bet that she is decidedly interested in him. His scowl deepened.

"Morning to you, maybe, Mr. Eastman," she was saying coolly, with a glance at her wrist watch, "but afternoon to those of us who don't happen to be working on

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

morning newspapers. Two minutes after noon." She stood up and began to gather together papers briskly. "Mr. Stevens is inside."

"You know darn' well I don't come here every day just to see him," Eastman said. But he sauntered on into Stevens' office: a short, wiry youth, with turbulent red hair and a sensitive mouth. "Hi, Mr. Stevens," he said.

Stevens leaned his big back in his chair; it groaned. He looked his caller up and down, coldly, critically.

"Hello, Shorty," he said, with deliberate, slow malice.

Eastman said nothing, but the barely perceptible twitch of his mouth, his nervous glance backward toward the outer office, betrayed him. Stevens chuckled, perceiving that he had scored a direct hit.

"Pull up a chair—Shorty," he urged, mouthing the word with unction.

EASTMAN'S eyes hardened. The truculent upthrust of his red hair seemed to become more pronounced.

"My name is Eastman, Alvin Eastman," he said, very formally. "You may call me Eastman, or you may call me Al; or if you remain good-natured about it, you may even call me Red. But I don't want you to call me Shorty any more. You started doing that, as I recall it, when I first began to come in here, six months ago. I asked you to quit it then; and I don't like it any better now."

Stevens rose and expanded himself. Beside the other his seventy-six inches of height, his two hundred thirty pounds of brawn loomed vast. It pleased him occasionally to draw himself up so and outtop the world of humans; it pleased him now to observe that his secretary, from the outer office, had paused in the act of putting on her hat to watch him.

"Don't get hot—Shorty," he soothed, chuckling.

"I've asked you," said Eastman, spacing every word with a hard breath, "not to call me that."

"Why not?" Stevens grinned quizzically down at him. This diversion of man-baiting was rare sport; he indulged in it quite frequently, and his giant stature made it a safe enough pastime. "Doesn't it fit?"

"It fits, yes." Eastman's mouth twitched. "And that's why I don't like it. That nickname clung to me all through grammar school, and made me miserable. It wasn't until I made my letter as varsity quarter and coxswain that I managed to live it down. Now I don't want you to revive it."

"Oh, all right—Shorty," Stevens said, and grinned again, maliciously.

Eastman paled. His wiry, freckled hands flexed shut, then slowly opened. He sat down and lit a cigarette with fingers that fumbled.

"You're an underbred bully, Stevens," he pronounced at length, in a low, tense voice. "Also—" his eyes flicked briefly toward the typist's desk in the outer office where Ella inexplicably still lingered—"you hit below the belt. You dare to be insulting as most men wouldn't, because you think you're too big to lick."

"I don't think it; I know it. Especially in competition with a flyweight like you," Stevens retorted. He sat down, too, and resumed his idle gazing through the window into the street.

"Maybe," Eastman admitted. "And yet, I'm declaring war on you, Stevens. I don't like you. I despise you. You've gone to unnecessary trouble to humiliate me, and I'm going to get back at you. I'm going to hit you; hit you hard."

Stevens, contemptuously, did not trouble to turn from the window. "Start right in. Any time," he invited.

Eastman's voice became even quieter.

"You're being too literal, Stevens. I'm not going to go at you with my hands. I am going to hurt you; but not in quite that way."

Stevens stirred, at that. He faced around to Eastman, puzzled, a trifle uneasy. "What the devil do you mean?"

"I don't choose to tell you now," Eastman said. "But remember what I've told you, so you can't accuse me of shooting from cover."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HE SEEMED to shrug away his rage. His deceptively frail appearing form resumed its habitual deceptive slouch, his face its deceptive look of bored disinterest.

"I didn't come here to start a fight with you," he said. "Or even to angle for a news tip. I'm bringing news, this morning. The directors of the City Club met last night and framed a ticket for the elections. They moved to put their influence behind Lurton for mayor, Stone for sheriff. And you for county attorney."

"Me?" Stevens said, and gulped. He had dared hope he would be considered for the place, had even pulled a few discreet wires to that end. But so many others had scrambled to do the same that he had lost confidence.

"You, yes." Eastman's eyebrows elevated to a sardonic slant. "It was suggested that the office was an excellent training school for raw young attorneys. And that you needed help as much as anyone."

Stevens chose to let that thrust pass without retaliation. He hunched forward, frowning, tracing haphazard figures upon his desk blotter with the point of a paper knife. "You may quote me, if you like, to the effect that I am honored to accept, and will do my best if elected to serve the people of this county in—in an energetic and honest way," he dictated. "Fix me up a good statement. You know how."

Eastman stood up. "You're a little premature. You won't officially be a candidate until next week, even though the City Club's choice is equivalent to nomination. And you'd better talk to our advertising manager first. We give free readers only to people who contract for a certain amount of white space, you know."

"I'm no piker. I'll advertise," Stevens assured him hastily. He rose also. "Listen —Al: You're not still sore, are you?"

Eastman stayed imperturbable. "I told you how I felt. And I meant every word of it."

Stevens was nonplussed. He moved uneasily to a window and back.

"You don't own the *Bugle*," he blustered.

"No, I don't. But Hart, who does, is an invalid. And Burton, his so-called managing editor, is much more interested in golf than in the paper. Which leaves me, in effect, holding the reins. I'm city editor, Stevens. I'm also general reporter, copyreader, proofreader and county editor; and I make up the dummy. Ours is a small paper, you know; so I do just about as I please."

"I'll talk to Burton—" Stevens threatened.

"You'd be wasting your breath. He'd just refer you back to me. He'd not let a little thing like just another election interfere with his civilized leisure."

Stevens spoke loudly. "You can't keep me out of the paper altogether. You'll have to at least include me with the list of candidates, and give me some kind of a play if I take white space."

"You've got me wrong," Eastman said. His voice went to a smooth purr. "My remark about free readers may have misled you, but I didn't intend anything personal. I've told Lurton and Stone the same thing already this morning." He paused to ponder; and faintly, as he reflected, he began to grin. That faint grin was a danger signal, as some of the more observant of his opponents on the gridiron had discovered—usually when it was too late to do anything about it. "I'm going to put you into the paper, Stevens. A lot," he said. "I'll publicize you as no other candidate for the office has ever been publicized."

Stevens stared at him in apprehension. "If you figure to libel me—dig up some dirt—"

"I don't. In the first place, I wouldn't try. Mud slinging isn't quite my game. And then, I doubt that it would do me any good. Superficially, Stevens, you're a reasonably good citizen. So far as I know you've always behaved yourself. What makes you so despicable is your silly egotism and your gift for finding the sore spot of any man you choose to divert yourself with, and torturing him from the safe heights of your massive physique. But that's not the sort of thing I could publish in a newspaper."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He turned, walked to the door. Stevens came after him and clamped down a huge, placating hand upon his shoulder.

"You said you'd get back at me," he ventured, with an uneasy half laugh. "And you rather had me thinking you'd try to do it through your paper."

"I will, Eastman said, his eyes hard, his red hair more noticeably truculent than ever. "In just the way I've told you."

HE SHOOK loose Steven's hand and went into the outer office. There Ella still lingered, apparently busied with a brief. He stopped before her desk.

"There's a swell show at the Colonial tonight," he informed her. "Musical comedy; the Broadway cast intact. I've got two tickets. Want to come?"

She considered, a pencil end thrust thoughtfully against her teeth.

"I'm sorry," she said finally, coolly. "I don't believe I'd care to."

He flushed. He started to turn away, then swung back.

"Why don't you care to?" he demanded. "Is it that you don't like musical shows; or just that you don't want to go with somebody who happens to be no taller than yourself?"

She took time for her reply. "I'm rather fond of musical shows," she said at length, with a measured emphasis that made her meaning unmistakable.

"I see." He went out, banging the door furiously behind him. After all, he had red hair. . . .

Stevens had heard. He sauntered out into her office, grinning broadly, pleasantly conscious of his own impressive bulk and brawn.

"You've got the right idea, Miss Davis," he complimented her. He had regarded her with a fond eye ever since she had come to work for him, four months before, but as yet she had given him no encouragement. "No girl with any sense would want a shrimp like Eastman when she could have a life-sized man. I've got tickets for that show, too. Better come along with me."

She stood up. She put on her hat and a smart spring coat. "I'm sorry," she said. "I don't believe I'd care to." She went out.

"Well I'll be—" he muttered in bewilderment, and then stopped at that. A man who is practically certain to be the next district attorney, he remembered suddenly, shouldn't swear; not even at the mystifying, unfathomable capriciousness of women.

LATER in the day, Stevens was summoned to the offices of Hayward Classen, real estate broker, City Club president and acknowledged political boss for the state's dominant party. Closeted with Classen were other men of weight and influence, as well as Lurton and Stone.

Classen was cordial with him, in much the manner of a monarch stooping to confer a favor upon a random member of the palace guard.

"We chose you for the job, Stevens, because there's nothing against you," he explained. "Our fight here in the district this year won't be with the opposition party. It's the Independents, this so-called reform crowd, we've got to lick. Sturgeon, our perennial insurgent, is coming out for mayor, and he's bringing a fairly strong ticket in with him, including Dee, the attorney and philanthropist, who will run against you. Their mistake is in tipping off their hand before we had announced. Any man who has ever been in public life is vulnerable to attack, particularly by any such political opportunist as Sturgeon. But in you and Stone and Lurton we have men they can't hurt, because none of you has ever been in office. Just keep your noses clean, and we'll win."

He approved the rough draft of an announcement Stevens was preparing for the *Bugle's* advertising columns, and in parting advised him to get right with the paper and stay that way.

Stevens went away worried. Eastman, he was realizing, could do him a great deal of harm if he chose; might even, if he carried his grudge to the bosses, succeed in having his candidacy revoked.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But it developed that his alarm was apparently groundless. On the day after his nomination had been confirmed and advertised, the paper gave him a ten-inch reader on the front page—more space, in a far better position, than was awarded either Stone or Lurton.

A few days later, Eastman came into Stevens' office to ask for a special photograph. The one appearing in the advertisement, he explained, was not quite suited for his purpose. He wanted a better one to use in illustrating some succeeding readers he had in mind.

Stevens was surprised. It was not customary to use cuts in connection with free readers. "You're doing the same for the other candidates?" he asked.

"No," Eastman said. "Just you."

From the dozen portraits Stevens spread down for him, he pounced upon one with delight. "Exactly what I want!" he exclaimed with seeming seriousness. "By some happy accident it's a perfect likeness. It has a quality seldom seen outside portraits painted by the masters. It catches that intangible, inner something that makes you, you."

EASTMAN printed the picture frequently thereafter: as a three-column cut splashed arrestingly across Page One when Stevens delivered his first speech; as a two-column cut twice thereafter; and in one-column size daily for ten issues to illustrate a serialized biography of Stevens.

The biography was fair and accurate, even generous to its subject. Stevens was so taken with it that he had the series mounted and hung in his outer office. The fact that it failed visibly to impress Ella, however, nettled him. Indeed, she seemed altogether unimpressed by his recent rise to prominence. His only comfort was that she gave Eastman no more encouragement.

The reporter, however, seemed unaffected by her coldness. He was in and out of Stevens' office even more frequently than before; and his astounding generosity with his paper's white space continued. In one issue, which came jocularly to be known as "The William A. Stevens edition," he featured the attorney on every page. On Page One, illustrated, was the lead of a speech Stevens had delivered at an upcountry rally. The speech, in full, was concluded on Page Two. Page Three carried a half-column story built about an interview, and the lead editorial concerned itself with a glowing endorsement of Stevens, with no one else of his ticket even mentioned. The sports page featured his activities as referee in a boys' basketball tourney, the society page made prominent mention of his presence at an afternoon tea, and the last page was splashed with photographs, liberally captioned, of some of his relatives. Stevens helped considerably in the distribution of that issue.

Eastman even began making him the inspiration for a string of ingenuous features. One, headed "Around the Clock with William A. Stevens," illustrated, followed him with the most minute attention from breakfast to bed. It omitted nothing, not even his preferences in food and neckties. And the *Bugle* continued to print lengthy, verbatim extracts from all Stevens' speeches. The fact that most of them repeated one another seemed to make no difference to Eastman.

At those times when he had leisure for reflection, Stevens puzzled over this. Far from trying to keep him out of the paper, Eastman seemed to be making a special pet of him. Neither his own running mates nor any of the Independents were accorded a tenth the publicity that was granted him. He could only conclude that the reporter sensed the rise of a new political star and was preparing to hitch his wagon to it; in other words, ask some small favor.

Well, Stevens told himself smugly, he'd grant it, if Eastman didn't ask too much; he'd be generous with everyone who could be made useful to him. There was no doubt in his mind now that he would win. Even Classens, notably a pessimist, admitted he could not see how anybody on the ticket could miss. Thanks to his care in drafting

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a slate, the Independents had nothing to tilt at but political ghosts.

Returning on the eve of election from what was described in the *Bugle* as a "whirlwind tour of the county," Stevens told Eastman, for publication, that the election was in the bag. The only question was the size of the vote.

SITTING in the offices of the City Club twenty-four hours later, in company with all the party's district notables, Stevens was only mildly surprised at the trend of the early returns. Early returns, he reminded himself, never mean anything. But as precinct after precinct reported, he experienced first shock, then incredulity, then a terrible humiliation. At two o'clock in the morning he stumbled out, with his associates pouring into his ear assurances that had no ring of sincerity, that curiously seemed lacking in regret or sympathy. There was still a chance, they said, of a reversal; the more distant townships still had to report.

But he had resigned himself to defeat even before a *Bugle* extra, thrown into his office early, confirmed it. He scanned the paper stupidly, his brain whirling to a vast interrogation point.

His name again was in the headlines. But this time it gave him no thrill of pleasure. Stretched across the front page was the streamer:

STEVENS ALONE LOSES TO INDEPENDENTS!
County Attorney's Post to Dee; All Other Line Candidates Winners by Heavy Majorities

Presently Stevens had recovered enough to read the story under it—giving special attention to a bold-faced box set into the last right-hand column:

> Political prognosticators this morning expressed amazement at the choice of Francis R. Dee, of the Independents, in place of William A. Stevens, who alone of all his ticket failed to be elected. Such a thing has never before happened in the history of this county, they claimed. The opinion was expressed that Stevens must somehow have made a particularly virulent enemy, or enemies, who in some insidious manner were responsible for his defeat. . . .

THE inference of that last line was plain; Eastman, somehow, inconceivably, had contrived his ruin. He sprang to his feet in a sudden rage; but then he sank helplessly back into his chair. How could he retaliate when he didn't even know what his enemy had done to him? He would have to wait.

Ella came in soon after. She did not mention his defeat, and her manner did not encourage any discussion of it. And toward noon, Eastman called.

As he came up to Stevens' desk, the latter eyed him balefully.

"You've got your nerve, to come here," Stevens growled. "You're not fooling me any more. You knifed me in the back some way all the time that you were pretending to give me all that publicity. I don't know how—"

"I can tell you," Eastman said cheerfully. He dropped into a chair and lighted a cigarette with deliberation. "It was the publicity that beat you," he said.

He tilted back his head and flicked an amused but not at all supercilious glance at Stevens. Blue smoke drifted from his mouth.

Stevens gaped. "The publicity? But it couldn't. That was favorable publicity.

"Neither favorable nor unfavorable," Eastman corrected. "It was like that photo of you I selected for publication. It told the truth about you."

"I don't get you," Stevens said, bewildered.

"That's because you've never seen yourself as you are, Stevens: as insignificant in everything but bulk. And little men look bad in big type, Stevens; that's the principle I used to sink you. People got tired of seeing your name in the paper: that smug, stuffy name, William A. Stevens, that you insisted I should use to give you dignity. They got tired of reading your dreary, repetitious speeches. They grew

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

everlastingly weary of following you on your insipid rounds from breakfast to bed, and they gagged on the tepid biography of your tepid life. And particularly they were repelled by that smug, commonplace pan of yours, looking out at them day after day from the pages of our paper.

"Publicity, good or bad, doesn't hurt anyone much, if he's big enough, Stevens," Eastman concluded. "Humanity will pardon a man's mistakes or his oversized ears or even his lack of exceptional intelligence, if he has balanced it with generous deeds or daring acts or even good intentions. It's only negativeness that people can't forgive: lack of stature, lack of color. And you're pint-sized, essentially, Stevens; and you're all in neutral grays. Put onto the printed page you bored people. And they punished you."

He made a little gesture with his outspread hands.

"People," he said, "hate to be bored, you know."

Stevens leaped up, his great hands clenching. "So you framed this! You framed it to ruin me!"

"You've guessed it," Eastman said. "In the first place, I had a personal motive. You'd insulted me, you'd hit below the belt, because you thought you were too big to lick. Aside from that, I hardly think you're the kind to make a capable public servant. Dee has his faults, but he's a vast improvement upon your kind."

Stevens advanced upon him, a towering figure of menace. "I'll break you in two!" he shouted.

In the outer office, Ella rose to her feet with a little cry of alarm.

But Eastman stood his ground unflinchingly, his eyes examining the other without fear, only with curiosity. Stevens came to an indecisive halt.

"No you won't," the reporter said, at length, positively. "Such men as you never break anyone in two, Stevens. You couldn't. You wouldn't know how to start. You only hold over people the threat of your tremendous size, like a trembling mountain."

And coolly, without hurry, he turned and went out. Stevens stood looking after him, shaken with fury, but held to the spot inexorably as if he had been set in concrete. It was true. Such men as he never attack anyone. They cannot. They wouldn't know how to start.

BEFORE Ella's desk Eastman stopped. "There's a movie at the Palace tonight," he said. "It's probably a hammy picture. Want to come with me?"

"Well—" she said. She had a little difficulty in speaking, and in her cheeks was a warm, red flush. "If I should say 'No,' would you ask me whether I was refusing because it was a hammy picture or because I didn't want to go with someone no taller than I?"

"No," he said. "I'd not ask that this time. I know better now. You have more sense than to judge a man merely from the way he stacks up against a yardstick or tips a Toledo scales."

"You've got the general idea," she agreed. "No woman worth a drink of soda pop really cares much whether a man is five feet tall, or seven, just so he doesn't develop a complex about it. Complexes like the one you were carrying around up to a month or so ago are bad things to live with, you know. It's better to let people work them out of their systems before you permit yourself to get too fond of them."

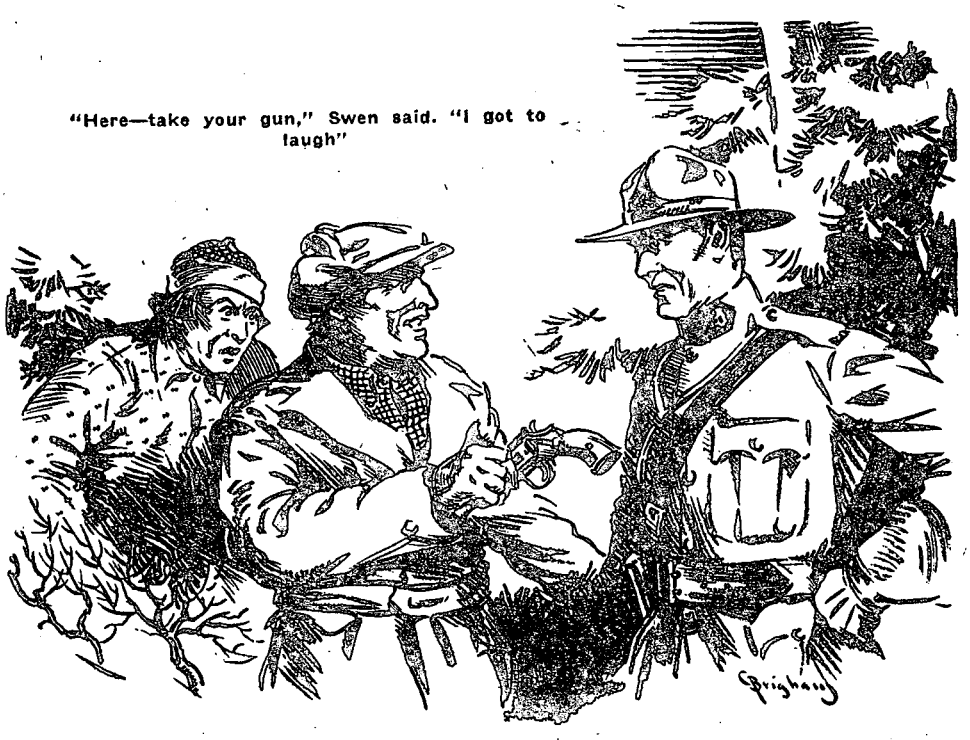
"I believe I'm about rid of mine," Eastman said, with a glance back at the impotent Stevens. "Mere size won't awe me any more. So what about that movie? And lunch with me, say, right now?"

Ella stood up. She reached for her hat and coat, decisively.

"Okay—Shorty," she said.

And she saw, with gratification, that he only grinned, that he showed no trace of resentment. He could be a lot of fun, she decided, now that he had lost his complex —which would have been a bad thing to live with.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



"Here—take your gun," Swen said. "I got to laugh"

The Toast of Handsled Burke

By C. F. KEARNS

Author of "The Shortened Hammer," "Men Without Dogs," etc.

THE POPLAR trees were shading to yellow gold when a hesitant stranger came into the dining room of the only independent restaurant of the new mining camp at Rickman's Lode. It was mid-afternoon and the place was empty, but a tall red-headed man stalked out from the kitchen.

"Good day," he said civilly, and his bleak blue eyes and dour tone were not cordial. "Do you want something?"

The stranger did not immediately answer, but seated himself with a hint of weariness on one of the backless benches that ranged the single long table. He laid his gray felt hat on the white oilcloth, revealing thin gray hair brushed across his baldish crown. The restaurant proprietor stared in some perplexity, deciding that the newcomer had just arrived on the daily plane, and that he had travelled far and hastily. His well-tailored suit, his striped collar were crumpled as though he had slept in them. His light, low shoes did not belong in the far North. A leather travelling bag lay just inside the door.

"Something to eat?"

The stranger shook his head, smiling faintly with his lips, mechanically.

"The pilot of the plane—ah—suggested you might advise me. I wish to take a long and confidential trip. North."

The red-headed restauranteur pulled out a bench opposite and sat down with his el-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bows on the table. Pale lights came and went in his eyes, eager, keen. All sorts of men came to the lonely lands and for those who knew the wilds there was good profit in such, for they were helpless without assistance. And this man, this elderly, frail city product, would need much capable help to travel.

"A long trip? A secret trip? At this time of the year—with winter just around the corner? The pilot told you to come here, eh? That means you won't go by plane. Do you know what such a trip means?"

The stranger partly answered the questions, and in a practical fashion. He took out a bulging billfold and laid it before him.

"Will a thousand dollars do?"

"No," snapped the red man, his jaw jutting, a thrill of anticipation catching at his words. "It's a starter, though." He lifted his voice:

"Swen."

"Yo!" A bellow of response from the kitchen. A bulky man came forth, ducking his fair head to avoid the lintel. A huge, gross, broad man with long, thick arms and a crushed nose, his vacuous face seamed and broken with a perpetual grin that made him look like a good-natured gargoyle.

The red-head stood up. "My name is Burke," he told the stranger. "They call me Handsled Burke in these parts. This is my partner—Two-horse Swen. The pilot recommended us to you. Probably told you we were hard men, and tough men. By heaven, Mister, he told you no lie."

The stranger nodded at Swen, acknowledging the introduction. "My name is Mason—A. W. Mason, of Los Angeles. I wish to arrange a trip. North. By canoe. It may take some time. Months, perhaps. What is your price?"

"Ho," said Swen, his eyes on the wallet. "You tell him, Burke. Yah."

"No questions," stipulated Mason. "We must not be followed. No one must see us. I wish to leave here secretly. Do you understand?"

Handsled Burke looked at his partner, Two-horse Swen.

Swen spoke up. "You don't want to be followed? You don't want to meet somebody? You want to go someplace. Yah. Dat sounds sort of funny."

Mr. Mason did not reply.

"It is outside the law," said Handsled Burke flatly, "and our price then is—ten thousand dollars."

Mr. Mason nodded. He opened the billfold and the crisp sheaf of compact money stirred with an intriguing whishh as his fingers ruffled its edges.

BURKE felt his pulses jump. He had seen thousand-dollar bills before; long ago. Long, despairing years since.

They watched, fascinated, as the trembling, deliberate fingers of this mysterious alien plucked at the money, extracting the notes from the crossed elastics, and laid them criss-cross on the table. Ten of them.

Ten thousand dollars!

Swen sucked in his breath with a gasp and forgot to grin as Burke picked up one of the bills, crumpled it in his fingers, saying softly, "A thousand-dollar bill! A thousand dollars; good American money!"

Mr. Mason was waiting, one hand still on the billfold, whose contents seemed scarcely depleted.

"Ho," said Swen suddenly. "Sure we go. We close this little eating house right now. Let it go. We ain't got much business anyhow."

"Wait," bade Burke harshly. "We don't know where we are going or what we are going to do when we get there—or how long we will be gone. Do we winter in the bush?"

Mason's smile was enigmatic. "No questions," he reminded softly.

"All right." Burke's thin lips twisted wryly, "but where do we go. We've got to know that—to get outfitted properly?"

Again Mason reached for his inside coat pocket and brought forth a thin map, creased with many folds. This he spread open, moving the money to one side. He took out a pencil as Burke came around the table beside him, adjusted the lead, poised the pencil, peered at the map.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"This is not the one I marked," he complained mildly. "Must have mislaid it. Where are we?"

"Here." Burke's forefinger stabbed the paper.

"Ah—yes. I wish to go down this river and up this one, and then across to this stream and—ah—down it some distance."

Burke chewed his lower lip, contemplating the pencilled line on the map, frowning.

"Murder is out," he snapped.

"Eh?"

"That will be no picnic—that trip. Down the Rickman River and up the Tesla and across the divide on to the upper Blackwater. You aren't going that way—secretly—for fun. . . . All right, Mr. Mason from Los Angeles. We will take you where you want to go."

Mason regarded them candidly. Burke and Swen dwarfed him, both in size and stark animal strength. They were big, each an inch or two above six feet, with deep chests and straight backs. But where the might of Swen was the awkward brutishness of the grizzly bear, the man, Burke, was lithe and limber as the tawny feline of the southern mountains, the cougar. They loomed above him; virile, capable—dangerous men. He nodded, satisfied.

"You will do as I say and ask no questions," he told them. "You will undertake that we shall not be followed or—ah—that no one will interrupt us until I have—" He hesitated long, passing a pale hand over his eyes, across his forehead. He seemed very tired.

"Danger," he breathed softly. "Much danger. I will pay you when we get there. If we are discovered—"

"You won't be discovered," Burke assured him confidently. "But have you any idea of what this involves? Winter is just around the corner. It will be on us any time. That route looks fine on paper, but maps are only approximate. They have little or no detail on them and a lot of it is incorrect. That divide alone may mean anything from twenty to fifty miles overland. Can you stand such a trip—on foot?"

"You will see that I do—for ten thousand dollars—payable when we reach the Blackwater River."

IT WAS three o'clock in the afternoon when the mysterious Mr. Mason came into the restaurant at Rickman's Lode. At eight o'clock that night, when the moonless darkness lay on the land, Burke and Swen had carried their twenty-foot freight canoe—that had lain through the summer months, covered with a tarpaulin at the rear of their kitchen—stealthily down to the river, a stone's throw away. Their supplies, stowed in waterproof canvas bags, with the exception of a rifle and Mason's handbag, had been loaded in successive hasty trips.

There had been little chance of interruption for their few patrons after reading the sign on the restaurant door, announcing that the place was closed forthwith, had departed for the company boarding house farther up the single street. There was small inducement for anyone to walk abroad in Rickman's after dark, so that their chances of discovery were remote.

On the morrow, however, the stranger would be missed, for his landing would have been noticed. Somebody would speculate where he had gone and presently the disappearance of Burke and Swen would be noticed. In due course—a matter of hours—young Corporal Swanson of the Mounted Police would push in the door of the restaurant and draw his own conclusions. He would note that they had taken all their outdoor equipment and their canoe. He would also learn that Burke had bought sundry articles of clothing—woolen underwear, pants, top shirts and mackinaw, leather-topped rubbers, heavy socks and mitts to fit a slight man of medium height.

Then Corporal Swanson would grin and wonder where they had gone with the stranger, and why. He would also rub his chin, in annoyance, because in the North the police wanted to know where all strangers went. They wanted to know that they were properly equipped and what their business was.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Burke grinned to himself in the darkness, in the stern of the twenty-footer. Swanson would wonder and would probably, after a day or so, report the matter to his superiors by radio. And a lot of good that would do!

The trail of Handsled Burke and Two-horse Swen would be hard to follow. Impossible to follow. The police had tried it before.

They had been dropping down the three mile current steadily since leaving Rickman's, and it was nearing four o'clock by Burke's luminous wrist dial when he said quietly.

"Ho."

Swen's bow paddle swung the canoe shoreward, to an opening in the timber, a thick but lesser height of foliage, a hint of open space.

A small feeder creek joined their stream, fringed with willows. Swen explored with his paddle and grunted. Burke felt bottom beneath and pushed. They rustled through the willows, using their paddles like poles, and pulling on the pliant saplings. For ten minutes they urged the canoe further up the creek until the bottom grounded on the mud. Swen stepped out and seized the bow. Burked did the same and for a quarter of a mile they dragged their craft farther, until the effort told them they had reached the limits of navigation.

"Ho," sighed Swen heartily. "I'm tired. Hey Burke, I guess I got soft bending over dat cook stove. Hey Burke?"

"I guess so," muttered his partner. "I don't feel so fresh either. We've got to harden up. Drag her up on the side so Mr. Mason won't get his feet wet stepping out."

They made camp in the dark, for it was black gloom along the creek, with the extra intensity of the pre-dawn. Swen groped around on the bank and came back to the canoe.

"All right, Mr. Mason. You follow me now." He grasped a cylindrical bed-roll with one hand and took his employer's arm with the other. "I steady you, so. We don't make no light yet. A light shines too far at night. Here—you stand there. I open this bag. So. Here, put your hand down. Now—you take off dem shoes and pants and mackinaw shirt and roll dem up under your head for a pillow. Put 'em outside de bag and it's softer dat way. . . . Now you lay down and pull the other half over you. See. You don't need to button it. No frost tonight, with all dem clouds. Maybe it will rain. Okay now?"

"Good night," acknowledged Mason, listlessly.

WHEN Mason awakened he found Burke squatting by his bedside with a cup of coffee in his hand. He roused up stiffly and took the cup. "Thank you."

"Sugar? Cream?" Burke had the two cans in his other palm, and a spoon protruded from the sugar.

"Black, if you don't mind." Mason took a tentative sip; drank slowly. "Is this customary service?"

"Well," Burke shrugged. "Almost. This is my first experience of conducting anyone in the dark, and I'm sorry we could not arrange a more comfortable bed. We'll pack a bundle of brush with us tonight and will be able to fix you up better. Swen and I are used to hard ground but it takes practice. If you'll just slip on your pants and boots we'll have breakfast. A man feels a bit chilly when he first gets up in the morning."

Mason ate slowly, in silence, while the two watching men anticipated his wants. When he had finished he sat back with a slight sigh. Burke tendered him a tobacco pouch and he shook his head.

"I don't smoke. Ah—this is really quite comfortable. I suppose you use very dry wood and what little smoke there is is dissipated among the trees."

"That's right," Burke nodded. "You have the idea. We could be more comfortable—throw up a table and seats in no time, but that means chopping, and chopping means noise and so on. We aren't taking any chances that we can avoid. I forgot to warn you—don't throw anything overboard when we are travelling. I mean any scraps of paper or the wrapping off a chocolate bar or anything of that sort."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mason smiled tolerantly. He stretched his arms and yawned. "I think I'll sleep some more."

"Sure," Swen agreed. "It's early yet. I'll put some brush down for your bed so you will sleep better. We let the fire go out when it begins to get dark and I call you. Tonight we take a lunch with us."

ON THE fifth night after they had left Rickman's Lode, the current had grown so strong that Burke gave up the struggle around midnight and at his word Swen grounded the canoe.

"We camp," decided Burke. "We aren't getting anywhere. We might try it with a moon but it won't be moonlight enough for another week. Tomorrow I'll scout ahead and see what the proposition is. This isn't much of a place to land but if we pack our stuff over the rocks we can carry the canoe up and hide it."

For the past two nights they had been bucking an increasing current, which meant heavy and sustained paddling, consequently slow progress. Burke had his doubts of being able to take the canoe much farther, and said so as they made ready to sleep in the sanctuary of the timber. With daylight they would withdraw farther from the water.

He sat in conference with Swen, before they buttoned their sleeping bags.

"Well," said Swen placidly, "I guess we are earning our money. Hey Burke?"

"Some of it," agreed his partner grimly. "It's all work. Say . . . I'm getting worried. I mean, if we have to travel overland. We can only pack so much and I've got my doubts how far or fast he can walk. The weather is hanging off well, but suppose the wind gets into the north and we have some snow. It won't be so hot."

"You said something," agreed Swen, jarred into solemn acquiescence by a prospect which was real and imminent. "We got to take a sleeping bag for him. You and I will have to go tough and yust pack grub."

"We've gone tough before," grunted Burke. "But it won't be much fun without a fire. There has been a plane up for two days now, and they are liable to try night flights. Spot a fire, sure. This money is off if we get discovered, remember."

"Ho!" said Swen. "Yah."

"I can't figure him out," mused Burke. "He won't talk. He says practically nothing. We've been with him five days and we don't know a single thing about him. He might be a professor or a lawyer for choice, or again, he might be a merchant or a broker—aw—I give up. Nothing in his conversation to give him away. He's never been out like this before and what he knows about it is just what he has read in a book. But I'll give him credit. He doesn't complain."

"He's tough that way," agreed Swen.

"Look," said Burke. "I've got it figured out this much. He wants to go someplace down the Blackwater River. It must be pretty close to where we strike it when we get across the divide. Now—the way we are going we will hit that stream just about the freeze-up. Any time about then. Now—how would you like to bet that he wants to get to this place—for whatever he wants to do—just at the freeze-up?"

"Why?" demanded Swen, not understanding.

"Aw," growled Burke. "You're dumb! Because we couldn't be interrupted, that's why. A plane—a police plane—would be grounded then. They couldn't use pontoons or skiis. The ice would be neither one thing nor another. This place we are going to may have a radio—that is, if there is anybody there, and I suppose there must be. Otherwise why would a man, who has not been in the north before, want to go there? Sure, we'll do our stuff and then dangle, before the police can get there."

Swen digested this theory in silence.

"Yah," he said absently. "Maybe." He yawned. "I don't mind hard work, Burke, but you got to do de t'inking. Yah."

In disgust Burke lay down to sleep. But he lay awake long, thinking of the things that money would provide. The civilized things that meant so much. That a man never ceased to want, even across the span of barren years.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THEY were up with the dawn and traveling afoot in different directions. A few hundred yards farther upstream a narrow creek joined the river, after running almost parallel with it on the opposite side of a low ridge. Burke returned to their camp and awaited Swen's return, which was shortly.

"We'll camp by the creek and look around. We must be getting close to the headwaters. One of us will go up the river bank and the other can explore this creek. We will either have to have moonlight for lining or poling, or else we have to see what it looks like in daylight, first."

They carried such of their equipment as they needed over the ridge and proceeded to get breakfast in the shelter of the spruces as usual. Burke aroused Mason and carried his sleeping bag to the new location.

While they were eating, Burke explained their situation to Mr. Mason. "This branching creek may be the headwaters, if the main stream branches, so any direction east will put us across the divide onto the Blackwater. We may have to go on foot from here—I think. Swen and I will explore while you stay here and take it easy."

"Ah—I suppose it will be quite safe? No wild animals?"

Burke suppressed a smile. "Might see a wolf or a bull moose. I'll leave the gun." He motioned to the short barreled carbine leaning against a tree trunk, handy. "Know how they work?"

Mason shook his head.

"It has been many years since I shot a gun."

Burke reached for the weapon and Mason stood up to take it.

"Seven shot, thirty-thirty." Burke explained. "It's loaded. You pull back the hammer to shoot. You reload like this." He pumped a cartridge out and replaced it in the magazine. Gingerly he let down the hammer and handed the gun to Mason. "Old model, but good enough for anything in this part of the country. Just swing it to your shoulder and line up the sights. Sure, that's the way. If you want to shoot, pull the hammer back with your thumb and pull the trigger with your forefinger. It's—"

Bang!

The rifle went off with a roar that startled them. Burke snatched it from the astonished Mason. He looked at the man in consternation and then his mouth twitched.

"Sorry, Mr. Mason. My fault. I didn't realize you were following instructions. Would have been all right if the gun hadn't been loaded. We're so used to firearms that we don't— I mean it was quite a natural thing to do."

"It went off so suddenly," apologized Mason. "But I think I know how it works now."

"Accidents will happen," soothed Swen cheerfully. "Hey! You ain't finished breakfast yet. Lots of coffee left."

They sat in indolent comfort while they sipped hot coffee with canned cream. Burke, rolling a thin cigarette, was thinking it would not be wise to leave Mason alone in camp.

The man puzzled him. For the first two days he had eaten very little and that at Swen's insistence. Later his appetite had improved, and as Burke watched, he reached for another thin, fluffy biscuit. As he did he glanced at Burke quizzically. "These are very good!"

MASON was changing. The outdoor life was a potent tonic. In his woolens and leather-topped rubber boots, he was different from the vague, hesitant man of five days back. As yet he had said little, taken no part in the strenuous activity of his guides, nor made any objection or expressed a preference about anything. To Swen's perpetual question, "What would you like to eat, Mr. Mason?" he had, night and morning, returned the same answer:

"It is immaterial."

Burke wondered how they would fare when it came to heading across the divide between the two rivers, over the hills on foot. It would be tight belts and hard miles, and Mason would have to be helped, and the present Indian Summer weather would break one day soon.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But they would bring him through. Again Burke thought of the money. He was always thinking of it. Planning . . .

"Hist," whispered Swen. "What's that noise?"

The two big men tensed. Then, scarcely breathing, they looked at each other apprehensively. It was a sound they both knew. The thump of a careless paddle handle, hard driven, against a canoe's gunwale. The hurried splash of the blade. Someone was coming fast.

"Kick that fire out," Burke said. "No, no—no water yet! You'll raise a dust. This would happen!"

They pulled the crackling sticks from the tiny fire and jabbed the burning ends in the dirt and leaf mould. They stamped on the hot ashes, kicking dirt over them. Then used the water pail and coffee pot sparingly.

The sound of a rifle shot carries far.

"He won't find us, maybe," hazzarded Swen in a hoarse whisper, but without conviction.

"Sure he will," growled Burke. "He'll smell the smoke. You stay hid. Let me talk to him. If I get cornered you take the canoe and pole on up the river tonight. I'll catch up with you."

They could hear the paddle plainly now. They waited while it died away and a footstep splashed in the water. A voice called:

"Hey! Hey—where are you?"

Feet pounded towards them, running. "Hey," the voice called anxiously, beyond the trees, short yards distant. Discovery was inevitable.

Burke reached for the rifle, glided noiselessly away, towards the water, when he spoke he was moving farther away from the camp.

"Here," he said roughly. "Here I am."

The man ran in the direction of his voice.

"Who are you and what do you want?" Burke's harsh bark discouraged intimacy.

THEY met in the wider spaces between the timber and the shore of the creek where a twelve-foot, factory-built canoe was drawn half out of the water. The intruder was a small, panting, dark man in his early twenties. And trouble lay on him.

"Hello, I—I heard you shoot." Burke loomed over him, menacing, hostile. The man gave ground, fell back an uncertain pace or two.

"I'm Joe McLean. Maybe you know my brother, Johnny. We had a little post on the Nabumi, at Three Forks. I thought I'd make more trapping, so I came up here this summer. My cabin is just up there on the lake."

"What the flaming so and so do I care for your personal history?" flared Burke, the gun muzzle in McLean's direction. "I'm not looking for company. Beat it back to your trapping, if you know what's good for you."

McLean's desperation dared the big man's wrath. Look, Mister—I'm in trouble. My wife ran a brass snare wire in her hand and she's got blood poison. It's all swelled up. It hurts her right under the armpit. She—she can't hardly stand it. I'm all alone and the—I— Oh, hell man! Help me! Help me somehow!"

"I'm no doctor!" gritted the unyielding Burke. "I'm not interested. Lance her hand and soak it in hot water and boracic. Put poultices on it. Take her out—down river. Don't come to me with your troubles. Beat it."

"Aw—" pleaded McLean. "Aw—I can't. I can't lance it. I—she's my wife! It hurts, when I try to touch her arm. She screams. I can't do a thing—I—His voice rose to a wail of hysterical grief. "Help me!"

Not a word was lost on Two-horse Swen and Mr. A. W. Mason from Los Angeles. Swen was half crouching, leaning on one hand. Mason sat on the feather sleeping robe, the coffee cup still in his hand, looking straight ahead, at nothing in particular.

For as long as it takes a man to count a score, slowly, there was no noise whatever, except the morning breeze in the tree tops, calm, friendly, almost inaudible.

A rifle butt jarred on the ground. An exasperated oath forced through the teeth of Handsled Burke.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Come on then. Show me your house!"

Big Swen looked at Mason.

"Dat's my partner," he said, his eyes shining. "Dat's my partner, Handsled Burke. Hey, Mister, you wonder why I go around wit' a feller like that? Huh. He's yust like a kid. Hey? Sure, you'd t'ink he was a hard guy. Yeh?"

"Yes." said Mason.

"Well, he ain't," Swen lazily sprawled his length on the earth. "I mean he ain't so hard."

"No," said Mason, half under his breath. "No. No. No!"

"Hey?" Swen sat up. "What's dat?"

"What does he know about medicine?" asked Mason sharply.

"Ho! He knows plenty about everything," grinned Swen, the admiration thick in his voice.

Mason was twisting the coffee mug in his hand. And his hand shook. The grin died from Swen's lips and something like fear came into his eyes. It was not fear, because Swen was not afraid, for himself, of anything. It was more like panic.

There was misery—plain, unmistakable misery—written on the face, in the moist eyes, the writhing hands, of the little, elderly man from the South.

And then Swen forgot Mason's troubles in the greater urgency of the immediate moment, when a sharp yelp rang through the trees. A triumphant, avid yelp, like a wolf at a kill.

"Hands up!"

SWEN whirled his great body without moving his feet, his muscles bunched to spring. But the gun stopped him.

A gloating man held a rifle ready, between the conifers, a dozen steps away. He was a dark, silent, weasel man; chunky, squat. Swen recognized him for one Charley Dicks, a half-breed trapper who had eaten Swen's cooking in Rickman's many times.

"Got you!" Charley Dicks edged forward. "Where's Burke?"

"Huh!" Swen grunted in his throat. "What we done to you? Huh?"

Charley Dicks gloated; a wary sort of contentment radiating in his jeering smile. "You guys ain't so smart. I followed you. Me!"

Swen said humbly. "Don't shoot, Charley. Sure, you got me. I ain't doing anything. Sure, you're smart. You're a good tracker. You want some coffee?"

The half-breed came closer, his attention on Swen exclusively. "Swanson is just back there," he announced, proudly. He'd never have got this far if it wasn't for me. He asked me if I was a tracker. Hah! I had to laugh. I can track a loup garou, I told him. He didn't believe it. I'll bet he'll believe it now."

The rifle muzzle was a yard from the still crouching Swen. He dropped his head dejectedly. "Sure, sure, Charley," his tone was adulant. "You're smart. I always claimed you was the smartest tracker—"

Swen uncoiled suddenly. The sweep of his left arm, as he drove upwards, smacked the barrel aside. His right hand clamped on the breast of Charley Dicks' thin windbreaker. Rearing to full height, he jerked the shorter man's heels off the ground.

Charley Dicks was game, if conceited. He screamed, "Swanson!" and swung the rifle by its middle. The barrel smashed Swen's ear against the bones of his head. Swen grunted. His left hand grasped the rifle stock just behind the trigger guard, clamping over the fingers of the frantic half-breed. Swen jerked, released the grip of his right hand on the jacket. He drew that hand back a bare twelve inches, and shot it upward like a wink of light, like a piston in its groove. His big hard fist caught Dicks on the side of the jaw and the man wilted.

Swen let him drop, still holding the rifle. Running feet crashed through dry forest litter from the River. Swanson—Corporal Swanson—was coming fast to the rescue.

Swen slipped behind a spruce. Swanson rushed up, and halted with a low gasp of surprise as he saw the sprawling Charley Dicks. Then he stepped out boldly, his holster flap unbuttoned, his revolver in his hand, his back to the quivering, crouching Swen.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Again Swen uncoiled to the powerful thrust of mighty muscles. He covered a space of twenty feet in a leap and a step that sped too fast for Swanson, ready as he was, to bring his weapon to bear. Swen's two hundred and thirty pounds of hard meat struck Swanson as he turned, knocked him off his feet. Swanson floundered his length on the ground and Swen's momentum carried him on top.

"Ay guess you better quit, Meester Swanson!" panted Swen. "Uddervise I might bust your arms."

Swanson groaned. Swen's knee was on his right arm, his weapon arm. Swen's big hand was twisting his left arm violently backwards. Swen's left hand was at his throat.

"Hell," groaned Corporal Swanson, who was young and proud of his own strength and fighting powers. "Let go. Dammit. All right."

Swen let go the throat hold, groped for the revolver, found it, and released Swanson's arm.

CORPORAL SWANSON sat up, and his humiliation was unpleasant to watch. He foamed, he jibbered, and then, because Swen did not grin, but stared at him, frozen faced, Swanson got himself in hand and slowly rose to his feet.

"Now quit dat," said Swen suddenly. "You didn't see me. I jumped on your back. I guess I got to put your handcuffs on you."

If a rattlesnake had bitten him—and there were none in the country—Swanson would not have been more startled.

"You can shoot me, Swen," he declared passionately. "But you can't tie me up with my own handcuffs!"

Charley Dicks groaned loudly and struggled to rise.

"All right den," agreed Swen mildly. "I guess maybe dat would be de last straw." He cast a quick glance around, located the rifle, backed towards it, felt it with his foot and picked it up with a quick swoop.

Swanson set Charley Dicks on his feet with a savage jerk. "You're a hot special," he told the half-breed. "We're a good pair," he added bitterly.

Charles Dicks said nothing but his eyes were on Swen, and in them was a grudging respect.

"Doctor?" repeated Swen, mystified.

"Can the innocent stuff," rasped Swanson. "You weren't so innocent when you slipped away from Rickman's in the dark. I mean Dr. Mason—the man with fifty-five thousand dollars in his pocket book, and bats in his belfry. I wonder how much he's got left now—wandering around in the dark with you two."

"I dunno," muttered Swen, a light glimmering through the dark mystery of recent days. "I—he ain't here."

"Any fool could see that," retorted Swanson. "Nor Burke, either."

"He ain't here," repeated Two-horse Swen. "Yah! Dat's funny, Swanson. Ho! Dat's a yoke. Dat's a good yoke, wait until I tell my partner Burke. He'll laugh."

"Will he?" sniffed Corporal Swanson. And received the surprise of his life, for Swen was advancing towards him, grinning from ear to ear, and he held the revolver by the muzzle.

"Here, take your gun. Here is de rifle, Charley. Hold dem for me. I gotta laugh. Ho! Ho! Ho!"

A thoroughly mystified Corporal of the Mounted Police and his equally astounded Special Constable, took their captured weapons from their captor and held them awkwardly while the man who tendered them gave way to a fit of genuine and unrestrained mirth.

Swen had no inhibitions. His mind was simple and direct, possibly incapable of concentrating on any subject but the matter in hand, and this particular thing struck him as extremely humorous.

His laughter rose in gargantuan bellows. He chuckled and the chuckles boomed. He tittered and his titters rose into shrieks. He pounded his great chest with his clenched fists and his mirth went up to the skies.

Swanson decided it had gone far enough. He holstered his gun and gave Swen a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

resounding thump on the back. It was a hefty blow for Swanson was as tall as Swen, and sturdy.

"Calm down, you big ape."

SWEN sobered slowly, the sands of his mirth trickling low. He drew his sleeve across his eyes.

"Ho! It's funny. Yah!"

"What's funny?" demanded Swanson. "It's serious, if you ask me. Abduction—that's the charge—is a penal offense."

"Listen," said Swen, "You say this doctor is bugs?"

"Well, not quite," Swanson explained. "He had a kind of a breakdown. He had planned a trip up north but he couldn't get away. He's got a big practice. Anyhow he drew all his money, got it in big bills, and wheeled up this way. Traveled by plane. His daughter got the wires hot and they traced him to Rickman's, Yeah! I was advised in the morning and you left the night before—after dark."

"It was easy to locate you." Swanson could smile again. "He left a map on one of the planes with his route traced on it."

Swen glared accusingly at Charley Dicks. "Tracker? Huh!"

"Well, anyhow, I found where you dragged your canoe ashore last night—you big stiff," said Charley Dicks, his fingers caressing his sore jaw.

"Yah! You try dragging a twenty footer up a bank in the dark. We did pretty well."

Charley Dicks nodded. "You didn't leave much sign," he conceded.

"You did pretty well to locate it at that," admitted Swen, justly.

The half breed smiled. That feud was dead.

"Yah!" said Swen. "He came to us to take him on a trip. He would pay us a lot of money so long as nobody seen him. We didn't ask no questions. Yah! We done our best. He's all right. He's still got his money. Every cent."

Relief showed in Swanson's face. "That sort of makes things different. Where is he?"

Swen glanced around the camp, walked over to their shelter, and looked inside.

"He packed a hand bag along. It's gone. I guess we'll find him up at the cabin. He must have gone just about the time Charley came along."

"Now," begged Swanson. "Don't get excited. Just take your time. What cabin? Where? And where is Burke?"

"We made a bargain," said Swen. "Yah! A big-money bargain. We would take him to the Blackwater for ten—for a good price. But it was all off if anybody seen him on the way or caught up with us. Dat's why we traveled at night."

"Anyhow you heard that shot this morning. We did it. I guess that was when you started looking for our canoe. Yah. But that shot brought a guy who has his family in a cabin at de lake, a little piece up the creek. His wife is sick and he wanted Burke should go vit him."

"Burke talked to him so he wouldn't see Mr. Mason. Burke went along, but Mr. Mason heard dem talking. We didn't know he was a doctor. I guess he yust remembered about it himself."

Corporal Swanson said slowly, "Well, I'll be damned."

HALF an hour later Handsled Burke came back to where Swen and the two policemen sat by the fire. His face was grim with furious frustration.

Swanson tossed a casual hand, not rising. "Hi."

Burke's saturnine lips curled. His eyes were hotly antagonistic, glaring down at the speaker. Swen said quietly, "Coffee's hot."

"Keep it," snapped Burke. "What are you doing here—Bloodhound?"

Corporal Swanson did not answer. He gave a terse instruction to his special constable: "Go back and see if our stuff is allright, Charley. Put it ashore. I'll want to use that sending set presently."

"You travel equipped," jeered Burke. "Radio! Afraid you'll get lost?"

Charley Dicks got to his feet, his hand gingerly touching his bruised chin. He

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

waited an expectant moment for some rejoiner from Swanson. Disappointed, he walked briskly away through the timber.

"Everything I do turns out to be a flop," growled Burke bitterly, pain underlying his words. "For once I thought I could see daylight. Yeah. Now it's another long, cruel winter in this blasted never-never land."

"Aw—we got a job with the company in Rickman's, both of us, any time we want to go back," defended Swen placatingly. "We ain't broke, Burke. You know dat. And we been broke lots of times, too."

"Bah," snarled Burke, ignoring him. "Why don't *you* say something—you paid man-catcher?"

"What do you want me to say?" demanded Swanson coldly. "I'm feeling let down myself. I had a run in with Swen here"—Swen apologetically grinned and fingered his swollen ear, winking at Burke—"He nearly broke me in two. I—look—Mr. Tough Guy Burke. I'm not laughing at you but I haven't got any sympathy to waste either. Savvy?"

"You've got more sense then I gave you credit for," growled Burke. He glanced around their scanty camp with unconcealed aversion, and slumped to the ground. He sat hunched with his hands clasped around his knees, staring gloomily into the fire.

They held a long, hard silence, which even the fidgeting Swen had no stomach to break until the arrival of Johnny McLean, with the doctor, brought relief to the three of them. Instinctively they rose.

Johnny McLean's happiness lay plain in his face, shone from his eyes.

"Hello," he greeted Burke jubilantly. "Gosh, I'm glad you had the doc along. Oh, I'm glad! I guess I upset your hunting trip but I'll fix that. That big swamp up behind my house is lousy with moose. There's one big bull that has horns forty feet wide. The biggest I ever saw. The doctor can take them back to put in his office if he can get them through the door."

He looked curiously at Swanson, who nodded at him. "Hello. I'll be up and have a talk—later."

"Sure." McLean took the hint. "Got to get back to the wife." And left them hurriedly.

"This is Corporal Swanson from Rickman's Lode," said Burke, civilly enough. The doctor and Swanson shook hands. Swen wadded up their bedding and brought it to the fire. "Sit here, Doctor."

"Thanks." The man of medicine sat down. The doubtful lights had fled from his eyes. They were still weary, but no longer puzzled. Watching him, Burke experienced a further flood of the sickening chagrin that had come upon him when the doctor had walked into Johnny McLean's cabin where Burke was trying to persuade a hysterical, pain-wracked woman to let him apply primitive first-aid. He wondered how he could possibly have been so mistaken in the man's condition in the first place. Dr. Mason had been in a mental fog when they had made their bargain at Rickman's. And Burke had not seen—

"Are you having a good trip?" asked Corporal Swanson, courteously. But it was a banal question, and he knew it.

Dr. Mason knew it, too. "Yes," he said quietly, and the hint of a smile plucked at his lips. He looked at Handsled Burke and that hard man's face flamed with the surging tide of humiliation's bitter draught.

"I've come out of the mist, I think," said the doctor gravely. And they knew, as he spoke, that he included them in his confidence. "They say a physician can rarely prescribe for himself. It's probably true. But anyone can diagnose a case when the patient is convalescent."

"You're not convalescent. You're well," stated Burke bluntly. "And if I hadn't been so dumb—say—do you mind—what was your trouble?"

"I just wanted to get away and go hunting," the doctor said simply. "I'd been shut up in my office for so many years—and every year I would tell myself: 'This is the year. In a week or two now you can get someone to take over your practice and then just pack up and go North. Go hunt-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing. Live out in the open. Rest. Not see any sick people for awhile. . . .'" The doctor looked at Burke. "Finally, when my conscious self wouldn't let me get away, my frustrated self—the unconscious—took a hand. With a nice singleness of purpose it took care that no one would find me. It schemed me up here into the wilderness with you and your partner."

"Until this nosey man-hunter busted in," said Burke. "What do you mean, Swanson—hounding a sick man?"

"It's all right," the doctor said. "I'm well now. And my family will be worrying."

Dicks came up, well-laden. He dumped a heavy packsack and a sleeping bag on the ground.

Swanson spoke to the doctor calmly. "Your family was worried," he admitted cautiously, "about your health. We told them that you had gone on a hunting trip with a couple of good guides, but that we would look you up at the first opportunity. They tell me that you insisted on overpaying them."

"Ah," said the doctor, "I seem to remember—"

Burke had taken out a flat wallet from his hip pocket. He tossed it to Swanson. "There is ten thousand dollars in that. It's a little above our regular rates."

Swanson whistled his astonishment. "Ten thous—"

"The regular rate is ten dollars a day for each of us, for which we provide a canoe and grub," said Burke, briskly, "from the time we start until we get back. If you still want a moose head, Doctor, and there is a prize head wandering around here, you can have him. And if his horns don't go sixty—no—sixty-five inches across the spread—why—you don't owe us anything."

"Well—" Dr. Mason considered, half-dubiously. "I should attend to that woman up here in the cabin for three or four days—until she is fit to travel. She should go to a hospital, of course. Is there one in this place—Rickman's?"

"Three or four days?" Burke stretched his arms until the muscles creaked. "That will give us plenty of time to hunt, get a few fish and a sackful of grouse. We'll have time to skin out that head and clean the skull ready for mounting. Shucks we'll flesh the hide and rough tan it so that you can take it back to the States with you. Then we'll all paddle back to Rickman's together, taking Johnny McLean and his wife along. This weather will last another week—with luck."

Corporal Swanson slapped his thigh with a flat palm so that it cracked like a pistol shot.

"Now you're talking! I'll send a radio to that effect. Tell 'em we'll be back as soon as the doctor gets his moose. A big one."

"Hey," said Big Swen suddenly. "That coffee is still hot. Let's have a drink. Hey Dicks! You got a couple of more cups? We got three."

"Sure," said Dicks, reaching into the pack. "We got cups. We ain't going to be caught like the Englishman who died of thirst beside the river because he didn't have a cup to drink with."

Swen made a clumsy ceremony out of pouring the coffee into the five cups. He handed them around after adding sugar and canned milk. He boasted to the doctor, grinning widely.

"I can roast moose ribs before the fire yust so you never saw anything better."

They stood with the coffee cups in their hands, in the golden glow of an autumn mid-morning. "Is it agreeable to you, Doctor?" Burke insisted.

"All my life—ah—for many years I have desired to hunt a moose," said the doctor, his eyes shining.

Burke held his cup high, with a lilting gesture that was at once buoyant and ironical. But, watching Dr. Mason, something caught at his breath; a savor of the earnestness and the anticipation that was mirrored in the Doctor's wistful eyes. So that his mildly scoffing toast took on a deeper significance.

"May our dreams come true," said Handsled Burke, humbly.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Genius Jones

By LESTER DENT

CHAPTER XXV

TRAIL OF THE LAMB

THE hands of the electric clock on the apartment living room radio said seven minutes until eleven. Funny Pegger glared at the clock, unable to get his foggy mind to think of anything but crap games, and resenting the coincidence of the seven and eleven on the clock. It was dark outside, and in the kitchen the electric refrigerator buzzed as it cooled itself. Funny Pegger let go the chair to which he had been holding, and promptly fell down.

"I do rather well," he remarked. "All things considered."

He lay there for a few minutes, wanting to go back to sleep but knowing he ought to go help Jones. After his better nature had emerged victorious, he got up and lurched to the table.

"Wake up!" he said thickly, to Vix.

Getting no answer, he fumbled around on the table, sprawling among the dishes, until he got three glasses and sloshed what water was in them onto Vix. Vix rolled her head on her arms just enough to show one blue eye. She winked the eye two or three times.

"Where did all this smoke come from?" she inquired drowsily. "There's a good deal of it."

Funny Pegger peered at her. "Wake up!" he said. "There's not any smoke."

"What?"

With as much clearness as he could manage, Funny Pegger said. "The place is on fire! Wake up! Wanna get burned alive?"

Vix mover her head again, a very little, then gave it up and shut her eyes. "That's too bad," she mumbled, and dozed off.

Funny Pegger went into a small futile rage during which he rubbed a thumb and middle finger together soundlessly under the impression he was snapping them in desperation.

"Jones!" he yelled.

This serial, herein concluded, began in the issue for November 27

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Leave him alone," Vix suggested drowsily. "He's probably sleepy."

"Jones—" screamed Funny Pegger "—is gone!"

Vix squirmed.

"Jones," roared Funny Pegger, "has gone with Glacia to find that crap game!"

"What?" Vix pushed herself up by pressing on the table top with both hands. She pulled her eyebrows together, pushed out her lips and shook her head. "What's wrong with me?" she asked. "Where is Jones?"

"Jones switched that sleeping powder on us!"

Vix rubbed her eyes and kept on shaking her head. "How? Didn't you put it in his chocolate?"

"I put *something* in his chocolate."

"Then what—"

"Oh, shucks! You remember I hid the stuff in a drawer while I helped you get dinner. He must have got it out and put sugar or something in the box. And he put the powder in our soup. I remember he came fooling around in the kitchen and offered to put the soup on the table. And the soup tasted funny."

"Why didn't you say so?"

The gag man groaned. "I thought it was the way you made soup."

"I must be good! You can't tell when my soup has Mickey Finns in it."

Funny Pegger shuffled from one room to another again and came back and said, "He's sure enough gone." Then he thought of something else and ran stumbling to the electric clock and put his round face close to the round one of the clock.

"We've been asleep two hours!"

Vix asked: "Where would he go?"

"How do I know?" Pegger planted himself in the middle of the room and looked in different directions. "He's with Glacia. She's taking him to that crap game."

"You said that before!" Vix experimented to see if she could stand. She could. She said: "We're wasting time."

It seems to be the misfortune of man to have his foibles become his necessities. The uniformed doormen, for instance, in front of all New York apartment-houses.

The doorman of Vix's apartment was taller by a foot than the average, and he had a noteworthy development of forearm and biceps muscles, as well as curly hair, and a grin both engaging and remarkable for the number and dimensions of the white teeth it revealed. He looked rather Irish, except that his skin was as black as that of Haile Selassie.

"Yass'm," he said. "I'se done been noticin' dat young gen'lman what's stayin' with you-all."

"By any chance," asked Vix, "did you notice him about two hours ago?"

"Hot doggie!" The doorman rolled his eyes.

"What do you mean—hot doggie?"

"Dat boy sho' done pick himself a scintillator fo' a mama," declared the doorman.

"Having seen Glacia," remarked Funny Pegger, "we understand you perfectly."

Vix glared, clenched her fists, stamped one foot and otherwise imitated a small auburn bull which had been shown a red flag.

"Where did they go?" she demanded.

The doorman shrugged mighty shoulders. "Dey done go where Boze take 'em, Ah guess."

"Who is Boze?"

"He's a frien' of mine."

"By any chance," Vix inquired patiently, "does Boze drive a taxicab? And was he hired by Jones and the —scintillator?"

"He sho-nuff does."

"Where can we find Boze?"

"Ah wouldn't know. Ah sho' wouldn't. Guess maybe he might come monkeyin' around again tonight. Gen'lly he does."

Vix produced at five dollar bill and held it under the doorman's dark nose long enough for him to become interested.

"Find Boze," she said, "and you'll be rich."

"Mah goodness!" the doorman said.

JONES had not been enthusiastic about eating a second dinner that evening. But Glacia hooked herself onto his arm,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gazed up warmingly into his eyes, and asked him if he wanted her to starve, and of course he didn't, so they went to a Japanese place on Forty-seventh Street for *suki yaki*. He paid the check and added another sum to the total mentally designated: invested in Jones, personally.

Glacia looked at him and smiled a siren smile. She had been propped on an elbow, absently studying two chop sticks which she was moving about with her fingers.

Glacia arose. "Excuse me," she said. "I'm going to do things to my face. Back in a little."

She walked to the rear of the place, through a door, up a flight of steps, and into a private dining room where Lyman Lee waved to her from a table.

"Hello, there."

Glacia gave Lyman Lee her hand and looked past him at Tray Marco, who was of steel coolness, and Paul Shevinsky, who gazed at her with a loose-lipped intensity. Harold Hover, the bacteriologist, sat behind a half-emptied pint of scotch; he looking more strained than the last time Glacia saw him. Forgetful Osborn peered at Glacia as if he couldn't remember who she was. The five men greeted her in their various ways.

"All set?" Tray Marco asked suddenly. His voice was so like a knife blade snapping that Glacia winced.

"Yes, I—guess so."

Tray Marco's eyes held her and she could not get away from their coldness even after she looked away. The eyes were not sleepy nor lifeless—just emotionless. The whole man did not seem to have a movable muscle. The cigarette between the fingers of his left hand gave off a curl of bluish smoke that might have arisen from an Indian signal fire.

"I'd hate to see you showing doubts," Tray Marco said.

Glacia wanted to say something cool and hard, but her mind would not supply the words, and her throat was too tight to make them if it had; she was scared of Tray Marco. The man was so obviously deadly. Something was happening inside her. Suddenly she hated the thing they were doing, and hated, most of all, her part in it. And abruptly she wanted to tell them that she was not going through with it. She was surprised that she should feel that way; she could not have explained it. She raised her eyes, intending to refuse to go any farther. But Tray Marco's look froze her.

"We're all rigged," he said. "Steer him to my gambling house on Forty-ninth Street. Better do it right away." He lifted the cigarette in his left hand and drew on it. "Forgetful, here, is going to run the crap table," he added.

Forgetful Osborn said, "I had something to tell you—let me think—Oh, yes. "I'm going to wear a disguise."

Lyman Lee chuckled softly. He looked at Glacia. "You can get rid of Jones as soon as we take him. I'll have your money. You get everything we take him for, as we agreed. We'll go somewhere and celebrate."

Glacia's lips felt dry.

Tray Marco looked at his cigarette. "The dame is getting a big cut. Forty-nine grand, the sucker has left, hasn't he?"

"That's all right," Lyman Lee said. "She's steering Jones for us."

Tray Marco frowned. "And me, I'm using one of my houses. What if Jones yaps to the cops? They'll close me up."

Lyman Lee shook his head. "Jones knows that the police want to arrest him for murder. Do you think he would go to them?" He grinned at the gambler. "I'm paying for this. If the price isn't satisfactory, I might sweeten it a little. Say five hundred and fifty for Forgetful."

Forgetful Osborn said, "You can see who is low man around here."

"This is swell!" Tray Marco put his cigarette on his lower lip and got up, paced once around the table, then took the cigarette away. "It's so swell, it stinks! It's too easy. There ain't nothing to it. And I don't like things there ain't nothing to!"

Forgetful Osborn said, "I remember that I've been telling you good gentlemen that this Jones may be an Arctic wildcat—"

"Shut up!" Tray Marco said. Forgetful Osborn subsided and looked as mild as he

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could. Tray Marco went to Glacia and put his forefinger, rigid, against her chest. "Look, babe," he said. "I don't know about you. I don't know about any woman. But I figure that it won't hurt you to know something you don't—"

"Marco!" Lyman Lee interrupted.

Tray Marco looked at Lyman Lee. "This is my part of the show and I'm running it. I'm telling the girl off." He pressed the forefinger against Glacia. She could feel its pointed harness. "Did you know," Tray Marco asked coldly, "that your boy friend Lee hired Hover to knock off that German liner-captain?"

Glacia's lips twitched apart. "I—"

"I just wanted you to know," Marco said, "how deep it is. And you're swimming in it with the rest of us."

Glacia swallowed.

"So I'd play the game if I was you," Marco added. He sat down and lit another cigarette off the one he had been smoking.

GLACIA was pale as Lyman Lee and Forgetful Osborn accompanied her as far as the head of the stairs. They stood and watched her descend, going slowly, as if she was dazed. "I was just thinking," Forgetful Osborn said, "that maybe Tray Marco hadn't ought to have done that."

Lyman Lee shrugged. It'll scare her into line if she had any ideas about stepping out on us."

"Marco is great at scaring people," Forgetful grumbled. "He scares me all the time."

Lyman Lee said nothing. He was frowning after Glacia. She went through the door at the bottom of the stairs and Lyman Lee removed his monocle and fingered it, still not saying anything.

"Tray Marco," said Forgetful, "reminds me of a trained tiger."

Lyman Lee scowled at the foot of the stairs.

"I once had a friend who owned a trained tiger," Forgetful continued, "but it ate him up one day."

Lyman Lee gestured at the stairs.

"Dammit!" he said. "I believe Glacia *has* got a yen on this Jones." He chuckled. "Now wouldn't that be one for the book?" He glanced at Forgetful. "What was that about lions?"

"It was tigers." Forgetful sighed. "It didn't mean anything—much."

The two men went back to the others.

Glacia had been struck by lightning. She sank into a chair in the ladies' lounge and got out a handkerchief, although her eyes were dry. There was pounding all through her. She felt the way she had the time her car turned over twice.

There wasn't anything she could do about it. She had thought wildly all the way out of the private dining room and down the stairs, and the distance had seemed five miles. She wanted to flee from the Japanese restaurant. Run away. But she couldn't. She had no money. Neither had her mother. There was no one she could borrow from; they had exhausted the gullibility of the people who had been her mother's friends before she married the foreign nobleman who frittered her fortune away.

Even before she had learned of the murder, Glacia knew she had stopped liking the plot. She knew the reason. She was a girl who prided herself on being cool and calculating, and she had tried to fool herself about why she had changed. But she knew. She had fallen in love with Jones. And it irritated her, because he was so absolutely naïve. How could she even like anyone so—so boorish? But Jones had some quality about him that had tripped her.

And now she was scared.

She had supposed the death of the German captain was what the papers said it was—the result of an infection. Infection. An infection was germs, or bacteria, and Harold Hover was a bacteriologist. . . . She shuddered. Her hands and face felt hot and the rest of her cold. Tray Marco wouldn't play—with murder, she thought first! And second, that one killing breeds another, often.

She got up and went out to the dining room, walking stiffly.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHAPTER XXVI

CHIPS

JONES was pleased with everything. He had been fed well, he was in interesting surroundings, had an attractive companion, and what was best of all, he seemed to have a fair number of his troubles crowded into a corner and was all set to knock them in the head. He could not escape the conviction that he was approaching a high point, bringing everything to a head. Little, as they say, did he know.

"Apex," he remarked, "comes from the Latin *apices,* meaning a small rod in the top of a priest's cap, and can refer to a part of a Hebrew letter, a diacritical mark, a section of a copper vein, the tip of a mountain, or the culmination of an activity."

Glacia reached the table, sank into a chair and stared at Jones. "I was referring," Jones said, "to the present array of circumstances."

Glacia smiled rather woodenly. Her lack of enthusiasm moved Jones to offer an excuse for his unusual remarks.

"Dogs," he said, "like to sit in front of igloos and bark at the moon."

His companion looked puzzled.

"I believe that they do so to relieve their canine feelings." Jones smiled apologetically. "My remarks serve the same purpose."

When they were in a taxicab, Glacia made an intent business of putting light to a cigarette. Jones leaned back on the cushions, watching the glitter of Broadway through the windows, feeling warmed by the brilliance.

"An improvement," he stated, "over the Aurora Borealis."

"Over which?" Glacia asked absently.

"The Northern Lights. Aurora Borealis." Jones rolled down the window to get a better view. "This is—er—the first time I have felt a preference for this form of illuminative display."

"Oh," Glacia said. "I wasn't noticing. I'm sorry."

Jones looked at her intently. She was preoccupied. And that, for Glacia, was unusual.

"Is something wrong?" he inquired.

Glacia put her head back so that the line of her neck and chin was a smooth sweep from quadratus muscle to clavicle, with a small and entirely rhythmic pulsing from an artery. "Everything," she said, "is perfect. . . ."

The sign in front said, *Bar.* In the rear was a door, beyond the door a corridor half way down which was another door and a flight of steps leading up to an enormously fat man who sat at a desk. A sign said, *Theater Tickets,* and there were four telephones on the desk. The fat man got up and nodded at Glacia and looked speculatively at Jones as they passed through another door into a long room with a low ceiling, full of refrigerated air, and tables were scattered about. Well-dressed people sat at some of the tables, having good food and excellent service.

Jones said: "I do not believe I could eat another meal immediately."

"The food is free," Glacia explained. "And very good, too."

Jones frowned. "But I thought you were going to show me where I could find the speculative business called craps."

"This way," Glacia said. "I was just telling you that the house gives food to its patrons."

THEY crossed that room and went through a door hung with velvet. The walls were dark, the ceiling low, the lights subdued. A number of tables of assorted variety stood about, surrounded by a fashionable, fast crowd.

"The dice table," Glacia volunteered, "is over this way."

Jones was pleased. "Am I to understand that the—er—performance of craps is only a partial activity of this establishment?"

"That's right."

"What are these other tables?"

"Roulette, faro, poker—"

"Are they all a means of making money quickly?"

"They're all gambling." Glacia looked at

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jones. On impulse, she said, "You know that you can lose money here as well as win it."

She knew that she wanted Jones to say that he hadn't dreamed of such a possibility, then she wanted him to get frightened at the idea of losing money, and hurry away to some place where he would be safe from Lyman Lee and Tray Marco and the rest.

"Yes," said Jones. "I know I can lose."

Glacia stared at him. "Then why are you going through with it?"

"I have to make fifty thousand dollars."

There was a quality in his voice that made Glacia look at him and think that it was as though something had cracked open and let her see grim determination to make fifty thousand dollars at any cost.

"I have to acquire the sum to replace funds which were swindled from me," Jones added, with a trace of desperation. I have learned enough to know that I am not competent to earn such a considerable sum in the time which I have. Ah—I had thirty days after the yacht docked."

Glacia bit her lips. "But you may lose!"

Jones looked determined. "I have made up my mind," he said, "what I am going to do."

"But—"

A sleepy voice at their side said, "Good evening. Is there something I can do to help you?"

Glacia shrank inwardly from Tray Marco's leaden manner.

"We—we're looking for the crap table," she said.

"This way."

In a moment Jones found himself before a table ten feet long, five feet wide, edged by sideboards eight inches high. The whole interior was lined with green felt. A black leather cup stood on the table, and two amber dice with white spots.

Behind the table stood a squarish man with dark curly hair, beetling black brows, and a carefully waxed moustache. He wore full evening attire, had a scarlet ribbon across his shirt bosom. He manipulated a small rake, dragging in the dice and placing them in the black leather cup. The rake was black, with a blade a foot long, an inch and a half high, and three-fourths of an inch thick.

Glacia looked at the rake wielder a second time before she recognized Forgetful Osborn.

"I think," Jones remarked, "that I shall watch, in order that I may see how to do this."

Glacia moistened her lips. Tray Marco was watching her. Forgetful Osborn watched the dice. They rolled, stopped with four spots showing. A man muttered, "Little Joe! Hit me again, boy!" The man was Harold Hover. His hands shook so that he dropped a few chips on the floor. Forgetful Osborn reached out with the rake for the dice, and Hover rolled again. The dice came Little Joe. The house paid.

Forgetful sent the rake after the dice again. This time, he squeezed the rake handle at the right instant, and a cleverly concealed trap in the rake blade opened and two different dice dropped out, and simultaneously another little contrivance whisked the original two dice out of sight in the rake-blade. It happened with lightning speed, and only a faint click. No one noticed. The only way they could have noticed was by the slightly altered position of the dice against the rake blade, which was almost impossible with the rake moving. The rake was retailed at ninety dollars by houses which dealt in such equipment.

Hover threw three consecutive sevens. The house paid.

Glacia touched the table edge.

"This," Jones declared, "seems to be what I have been looking for."

Tray Marco asked, "You want to try it?"

Jones examined Tray Marco. "I came here to do so," he explained seriously. "However, I should first like to ask some questions."

"Go ahead," Tray Marco said.

"Er—they may be of delicate nature."

"Go ahead."

Jones took a deep breath. "Is this honest?" he asked.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GLACIA caught her breath involuntarily—she knew Tray Marco's temper. But Tray didn't move a muscle. "It's honest," he said and smiled thinly. "But I run the place and you don't have to take my word. Suppose you circulate around and ask some of these people."

"Why," Jones said uncomfortably, "that will hardly be necessary. Your word will be enough."

Tray Marco nodded. "Want to try a small bet?"

"Er—may I?"

"Of course."

Jones looked enthusiastic. "Then I should like very much to indulge."

He produced his roll of forty-nine thousand-dollar bills. He peeled off one.

"I shall wager this," he said, "to begin with."

Tray Marco smiled at the cigarette in his left hand. "The banker," he explained, "is over this way."

"Banker?"

"You buy chips," Tray Marco explained, "and bet the chips."

Jones considered this. He frowned. "I thought," he said, "that money was wagered."

Tray Marco was patient. "Sure. You bet chips. They're money."

Jones picked up a red chip and examined it, then scrutinized a blue and a yellow chip. His conclusions called for a quotation.

"Chip," he announced, "derives from the German *kippen,* meaning to clip. It also means a crack or fissure, to break into a bud, or designates a Cuban Palm, a wrestling trick or a trivial object."

Tray Marco frowned. "Huh?" he said.

"My point," explained Jones, "is that I do not need chips. I need money. Therefore, I wish to play for money."

Tray Marco got rid of his frown and looked patient. "That's all right."

"I may wager money?"

"Yeah. We'll humor you."

Humoring him meant, it soon appeared, taking him for the tune of two hundred and fifty dollars in four smooth passes. Jones' eyes were brightly interested, and he seemed neither surprised nor upset that he lost. Tray Marco, watching Jones as closely and as impassively as Jones was watching dice and rake and croupier, could not tell whether Jones was spotting the tricky antics of that dishonest, oh-so-clever little rake. Jones' face was impassive. And so was Tray's.

After the fourth pass, he turned to Tray with a pleasant smile.

"You—pardon me—is there a washroom anywhere about?"

Tray told him.

As he crossed the gambling room, Jones stared intently at a blank-faced, beefy man in tight-fitting dinner jacket who stood in the doorway, obviously a bouncer or guard of some sort. Although Jones was not familiar with the term, he found it simple enough to place the man.

On his way through the door, he stopped for a few seconds' earnest conversation with the blank-faced husky. A bill changed hands—quite a small one—and Jones had secured the other's cooperation. Jones, it appeared, was expecting a young lady with blue eyes and very black hair. She would be gowned in green lace and wearing a corsage of yellow roses. Her cape would be mink, trimmed, with a red velvet tie at the throat.

The bouncer nodded woodenly.

"It's important that I know the moment she arrives," Jones said. "So if you would just report to me—I shall be at that table over there—every three or four minutes. Be very careful that the young lady with me doesn't hear what you tell me." He smiled in a creditable imitation of the Casanova-about-town manner, and continued on his way to the washroom, where he stood watching a fat man who was washing his hands. When the fat man had gone, Jones unscrewed one of the light bulbs, standing on a toilet seat to reach the bulb.

He took a dime out of his pocket, also his handkerchief. He folded and rolled the handkerchief until he had a tight cylinder of cloth nearly three inches long and not more than half an inch in diameter. He

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

balanced the dime on one end of this, and inserted it in the light socket.

When the dime short-circuited the socket, there was a devil-spit burst of blue sparks and whizzing and popping.

The lights went out. It got very black.

Jones walked out of the men's room, hurrying, and crossed, with skill born of a life spent where the nights were six months long, to the crap table. He felt around. He got hold of the rake. Then he got hold of Forgetful Osborn's arm. He put his lips close to Forgetful Osborn's ear.

"I wish," Jones said, "to converse privately with you."

Forgetful Osborn recognized the voice. "Gleeps!" he said.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE LAMB'S GOLD FLEECE

FUNNY PEGGER was never a patient man. He came rushing out of the apartment kitchen now with a bottle.

Vix frowned at the bottle. "That's swell," she said. "Get drunk!"

"What else do you expect me to do?"

"Nothing. It's exactly what I expected."

Funny Pegger planted the bottle on the table. "Watch me take an oath!" He raised one hand dramatically. "I do hereby pledge me to have nothing more to do with Jones, so help me." He picked the bottle up. "Where's the corkscrew?"

Vix said, "So you're walking out on him?"

"Out on *him?* He walked out on *us!*"

"Maybe," Vix said gloomily, "we shouldn't have tried to give him that Mickey Finn."

"I don't know what we shouldn't have done." Funny Pegger put the bottle down again, and said, "It's time for my regular five-minute visit to that doorman." He left.

He was back in a moment shouting and shoving two flustered-looking colored men ahead of him. One of the darkies was the doorman. The other was a smaller, rounder piece of ebony with a taxi driver's cap.

"They were standing out front talking." Funny Pegger yelled. *"Talking!* And us in here with our wheels about to fly out!"

"Boze only jes get back," said the doorman.

Boze looked injured. "Ah don' do nothin'," he insisted.

"Where'd you take him?" Funny Pegger roared.

"Ah don't know."

"You don't know?"

"Ah don't know what you' all talkin' 'bout."

Funny Pegger explained that he was talking about a tall, well-built young man who was a magnet for trouble and who had, it was rumored, hired Boze's taxicab for himself and a glittering female companion. The explanation was emphasized with arm wavings.

"Oh, dem folks," Boze said. "Dey went—"

"Can you take us there?" the gag man interrupted.

"Sho', Mike," Boze said.

FUNNY PEGGER sat on the taxicab cushions, and every two minutes, regularly, he poked Boze in the back and asked him why he thought he was driving a hearse. The rest of the time he sat with his fingers fastened on his knees and his mind stabbing itself with thoughts.

The taxicab shaved a parked car, two-wheeled a corner, scared a cop pale, and kept going.

"This ain't a funeral!" Funny Pegger yelled. "Get a move on."

He grabbed his knees again. Maybe Jones would be all right. Jones had a lot of that scarce commodity, horse sense.

The more he thought about it, the nearer Funny Pegger came to concluding that Jones' Genius, Inc., was the best piece of clear thinking he had seen since Roosevelt made the banks insure the depositors' money. The taxi came in to the curb like a badly disturbed rabbit. Boze looked around.

"Dey go to a rest'rant fust," he said. "Den heah."

Vix got out. "Whew!" She stared at

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the cab. "What a ride! I feel accordion-pleated."

"You may be yet," Funny Pegger muttered, peering at the establishment they were about to enter. "Know what this is?"

Vix examined the place. "It's made of brick."

"And Tray Marco," the gag man muttered, "is made of trouble. This is one of Tray Marco's joints."

Vix pondered. "I seem to have heard of a Tray Marco."

"Your education," said Funny Pegger, "wouldn't be complete if you hadn't." He squared his shoulders. "Well, here goes."

They went past the bar through the door and up the stairs to the sign that said, *Theater Tickets,* and Funny Pegger said, "Hello, Atom," to the enormously fat man behind the sign, then, after that they went on.

Inside the door, a slick man with dark skin and large teeth looked them over, then looked away, and Pegger breathed, "Joe Kirx, who got stuck in the vice racket trials." Of a man who might have been a banker, Funny Pegger said, "Collector for policy."

"Nice people," Vix suggested.

"Uh-huh."

"You know them so well, I'm getting suspicious."

They had paused near the door.

Suddenly Funny Pegger stopped. His jaw dropped. He grabbed Vix's arm.

"There he is!"

Vix stared at a knot of people, all well-dressed, who were doing everything but climb over each other to get close to something that was happening. A moment later, she saw Jones' head appear above the other heads, remain for a moment, then sink from sight.

"They've already taken him!" Funny Pegger croaked. "A mob like that would only gather to watch a killing!"

"Come on!" Vix raced forward.

"But what can we do?" the gag man wailed.

Vix didn't answer. She sank an elbow in a fat man's ribs, twisted and pushed. Funny Pegger struggled in her wake. They reached the craps table.

"Jones!" Vix gasped.

Jones, who was holding the black leather dice box aloft, looked at her. His face lighted.

"Eight," he announced, "is one more than seven. In Iceland, the word eight is called *atta,* in Gaelic it is *ochd,* in Danish *otte,* in Gothic *ahtau.* Rowing crews have eight members. Er—these amber cubes have five combinations totaling eight."

He rattled the dice in the box. "Eightur from Decatur!" he announced seriously. He threw the dice.

They came eight.

Vix clutched Jones' arm. "How much have you lost?" she asked wildly.

Jones gravely accepted the leather cup after Forgetful Osborn had raked the dice back into them.

"It is my wish," Jones said with dignity, "to permit accumulations to remain astride whatever it is they remain astride of."

A voice gulped, "He's letting it ride!"

The dice sailed againt the bump wall, staggered back, end over end and stopped six and ace.

"Oh, criminy—he's doing *that* again!" an onlooker groaned.

Jones picked up a stack of greenbacks and gravely counted them. He looked at Vix.

"I have won," he announced, "one hundred seventy-two thousand and ninety-eight dollars, six wrist watches, eleven rings reputed to contain diamonds, other jewelry, and a deed to an item called a Rolls Royce."

"Don't forget," a man croaked, "my sixty-foot yacht!"

BOZE, the blackamoor taxicab driver, was waiting at the curb downstairs, and he did not seem surprised when Funny Pegger and Vix come flying out on the street dragging a reluctant but elated Jones. With wild haste, Boze opened the door, helped hurl Jones into the cab, slammed the door, jumped behind the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wheel, and took the cab away from there with the speed and noise which will probably characterize interplanetary rockets.

"From de way you-all look," he said, "Ah done figger somethin' happen."

Vix leaned back, took two or three deep breaths and patted her chest with her left hand.

"Ah done figger it's jes' beginnin' to happen," she said.

"Ah-men," muttered Funny Pegger. "And ah-me!"

"I earned," Jones said proudly, "much more than fifty thousand."

Jones devoted some of his attention to remaining upright on the swaying taxicab cushions and the rest of it to stowing currency, jewelry, deeds and I.O.U. slips more securely in his pockets.

Vix looked at Funny Pegger. "They let us walk out of there with Jones."

"You're not as surprised as I am," Pegger said. "We ran, not walked, however."

Having completed stevedoring his winnings, Jones gazed amiably at his two companions. "My financial condition has improved."

"That's all that has improved, I'm afraid," Funny Pegger muttered.

"I only needed fifty thousand dollars," Jones pointed out. "But I made—"

"One hundred and seventy-two thousand and ninety eight dollars, six watches, eleven rings, and the Rolls Royce item," said the gag man. "We remember."

Jones was elated. He had to hand himself a bouquet.

"Er—I did rather well, don't you think?" he inquired.

Funny Pegger wiped his forehead. "Ask me again in a few days, after I see what Tray Marco is gonna do about this."

Vix echoed this sentiment with a grim kind of nod.

Jones felt deflated. Having just completed a major coup, he had reasonable expectations of being approved—if not dancing in the streets in celebration, at least some dignified elation. Instead of assuring him he had done well, they were acting as though he had stepped on the baby's kitten. Maybe it was after-effects of the sleeping powder. He held to the seat as the cab skidded around a corner.

"You—ah—seem in excellent health," he remarked.

Vix grimaced. "Just give us time."

"I refer," Jones explained, "to your recovery from the sleeping potion which you—er—consumed unwittingly."

"Unwittingly is right." Vix eyed Jones. "We wish to confess that we had ideas of feeding you a Mickey Finn to keep you out of that crap game. We admit we were in error. And we state that henceforth we believe in miracles. Lastly, we wish to know how *we* got the Mickey Finn instead of you?"

Jones smiled.

"I am endeavoring to become a student of human nature," he said.

"Eh?"

"I noticed a strange note in your behavior. Er—I formerly noticed a kindred note in the deportment of my pet seal after it had consumed a fish to which it had no right. I—well—I eavesdropped, saw where you hid the sleeping potion, and the rest was—ah—rather simple."

"I like the seal part," Vix said.

"The *simple* is descriptive, too," agreed Funny Pegger.

Jones beamed on them.

An unavoidable encounter with a cop who had a loud whistle and an extensive vocabulary chastened the progress of the taxicab, and also equipped Boze with a slip of paper informing him he would be expected in court the following day to consult a judge about speeding, reckless driving, running past traffic lights, and the oversight of not having his meter registering. They arrived at Vix's apartment house in a spell of silence.

"Ah sho' is havin' bad luck," Boze complained.

"You're around where it's contagious," Funny Pegger informed him.

Jones examined Boze with concern. "Do you," he asked Boze, "own this vehicle?"

"Nope. After what done happen', ah jus' same as don' own no job, neither."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jones explored pockets until he located a thousand-dollar bill.

"Here," he said. "Buy a taxicab for yourself, and pay the money back out of your profits."

Boze made sounds.

"The money is loaned to you by Genius, Inc.," Jones advised, "for the purpose of setting up a small business for yourself. There is no interest or security required."

"De Lawd," Boze said, "mus' love black men."

JONES was not unaware that Vix and Funny Pegger were regarding him as if he was something weird, as they entered the red-headed young woman's apartment. Vix flung off her hat, turned on an electric fan, fell into a chair, lighted a cigarette and began to smoke it industriously. She did not say anything. Funny Pegger did not say anything either. But both he and Vix looked at Jones. They seemed expectant. They were waiting for something. Jones didn't know what.

Jones began to feel uncomfortable. He ambled around the apartment, then emptied his pockets of wads of bills, and jewelry, making a stack on the table. He hoped that would break the conversational ice. It didn't. Vix and Funny Pegger just stared at him.

Jones feigned indifference, ambled over to the electric fan and contemplated it. In a moment, he did what every person does at one time or another in his life. He put a finger in the fan blades just to see what was happening in there.

"Ouch!" he said.

Funny Pegger got up out of his chair, came over and took Jones by the arm. He led Jones politely to a chair, carefully forced him to be seated in the chair, then patted Jones' arm.

"Please," he said pleadingly. "Please, all we ask of you is to be patient with us. We are trying to understand you. We really and truly are."

Jones was puzzled. "I do not comprehend. Both of you seem to be acting queerly."

"It's reaction," Funny Pegger said. "After-effects."

"I—"

"It's the lobwollies," Vix said. "We've got them."

"It is amazement," said Funny Pegger. "Simple and pure wonder. We feel like Darius."

"Er—the Darius named Green, with the flying machine?" Jones queried.

"No," said Funny Pegger, "The one who saw Daniel come out of the lions' den."

"Oh."

"Would you like to keep us from going entirely mad?"

"Why, I—"

"Then tell us how you *won*."

Jones frowned. "It was—ah—simple. I merely placed my money on the table, shook the little box and let the small cubes roll out."

"Oh!"

Jones smiled self-consciously. "I—er—also talked to the little cubes. Such things as, 'Baby needs new shoes!' and 'Come a natural!' Various persons were kind enough to coach me as to the accepted remarks."

Funny Pegger looked at Vix. They both shook their heads.

"Jones," said Funny Pegger, "there must be an explanation. There's got to be." He frowned. "What happened before you started playing?"

Jones considered. "Well, I asked if the establishment was conducted on an honest basis."

"You—ahem!"

"They said it was," Jones explained.

Funny Pegger swallowed and waited.

"Hire," Jones remarked, "is a word derived from the Greek *heuer*, which is similar to the Latin *hircus*, meaning the he-goat, or buck."

Funny Pegger wiped his forehead with the backs of both hands.

"So," said Jones, "I hired the gentleman who operated the craps table to work for me."

"*You what?*"

"It seemed quite a logical thing to do,"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jones explained seriously. "They assured me the place was honest. Therefore I saw no harm in employing the operator of the table. I—ah—asked him what he considered a fair night's income for himself. He replied, naming a sum called 'five grand.' I was surprised to learn this designated five thousand dollars, so I inquired if he thought my chances of winning were good enough to warrant such an outlay. He replied in the affirmative. In fact, he said: 'Brother leave it to me!' So I hired him." Jones gazed about.

"Ah—my employee is to call here sometime tomorrow evening for his salary," he finished.

Funny Pegger shook his head.

"Wait!" He held tightly to his chair. "Wait, wait! I think my head will stop swimming in a minute."

"When it does," Vix said, "paddle over and rescue me."

Then Vix got up slowly, came over and peered at Jones. "Where was Tray Marco when you were doing this *hiring?*"

"I—he didn't notice."

"Why not?"

"Ah—I had extinguished the lights for the interim."

"You—"

"Yes," Jones said. "To tell the truth, I did not like the looks of this Tray Marco, who was the proprietor."

Vix seemed to have difficulty with her breathing.

"You hired the house man to throw the game to you!" she croaked.

"I—what?"

"You mean you didn't know what you'd done?"

Jones swallowed uncomfortably.

"Craps," he explained, "means a gallows from which people are hung, as well as the dice game in which the odds are 251 to 244 against the caster of the dice."

Jones grinned, almost boyishly. That was the only thing he could have done that would have prevented Vix from heaving the electric fan at his head.

"There was more to it than that," she said darkly. "A lot more."

"Well, yes," Genius admitted. "There was. You see it seemed to me that the croupier bore a strange resemblance to the gentleman who got me to back that spurious orphanage. In fact, I am positive it was the same man. And I am equally positive that he knew I knew who he was. . . ."

"It certainly," Vix said, "was dandy for you to get it all straightened out so nicely."

"I think also that the little man was afraid I might—ah—retaliate," Genius went on. "I decided to play upon his fears. In addition to *hiring* him to be on my side, I made dark hints. A sinister-looking individual made regular trips to the table to whisper in my ear. I told the croupier that this fellow was watching him and that if he did not live up to his bargain, there would be—well, violence."

Funny gasped. "I wish I understood about logarithms. Or relativity. Or something. On account of I certainly do not understand what you are talking about. Who was the sinister-looking gentleman and what made him come up and whisper menacingly in your ear at three-minute periods?"

"I made him. I hired him to do so, in fact. He was, I believe, one of Mr. Marco's employees."

Vix made a strangling noise. "You hired one of Marco's men to come up and frighten Marco's croupier? I mean, that *is* what you said, isn't it?"

"Well," Jones said. "He didn't know he was scaring the croupier. He merely came up to tell me that the black-haired girl in the green dress hadn't arrived yet."

"I," Funny announced firmly, "give up."

Vix's reaction was more feminine. "What girl?" she demanded.

"Oh there wasn't any girl. I invented one as an excuse to make the bouncer come up and whisper to me every three or four minutes. It was really very simple. I pointed out to the croupier that since money had already won over one of Marco's men, he might just as well join the parade—rather than become seriously damaged. The bouncer really was quite a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ferocious-looking gentleman. He was very convincing. So what with this croupier fellow's being apprehensive about me in the first place, and scared of the bouncer in the second, he apparently figured that he might just well come and work for me. Elementary, really."

Vix extinguished her cigarette-end with tender care. "Anything that happens from now on will be an anticlimax," she said. "With arsenic."

The telephone rang and Vix went to the instrument. She held it out toward Jones. "For you."

"Me?" Jones was surprised. "Who is it?"

"Fate, I'm afraid," Vix said.

Jones put the receiver to his ear and said a polite, "Good evening," into the mouthpiece.

He would have had no trouble recognizing the voice, although the voice lost no time in explaining who it belonged to.

"Tray Marco. Cough up, Jones. The whole take. Otherwise, flowers and slow music," the voice said.

"But—"

The owner of the ugly tones at the other end hung up. Jones put the telephone down and frowned.

"What event," he inquired, "is associated with flowers and slow music?"

"Weddings," Vix said. "But not if you were talking to Tray Marco."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE WILD MEN

THEY did not go to bed as early as Jones had hoped. Funny Pegger's prebedtime talk was nothing to induce sleep, either. The gag man remembered a number of things, one of them being that Tray Marco might not be the best man from whom to win a hundred and seventy-two thousand and some odd dollars.

Jones was glad when the sun came up, even if it was raining again.

During the ride to the little suite of offices they had rented for Genius, Incorporated, Funny Pegger spent most of his time on his knees on the seat cushions, peering through the rear window of their taxicab. When they got out, he was a little pale.

"Whew!" he muttered.

"Has something happened?" Jones asked curiously.

"It's getting ready to happen." Funny Pegger pointed to a large dark car which cruised past. Two rather grim-faced young men occupied the rear seat, and they made no pretense of not looking Jones over intently. "You see that?" the gag man demanded.

"Why—"

"Tray Marco's boys. They followed us from the apartment."

"They looked somewhat young," Jones decided.

"Uh-huh. That's because they don't live to get very old in their racket."

"I do not quite understand."

"They're gunmen."

Jones pondered this, and immediately had an uncomfortable sensation. "Goodness!" he muttered.

"They're waiting around to see when you pay Tray Marco back the money you earned—as you quaintly put it—in his gambling house."

Jones did not need to be reminded of that. He had surmised as much.

Funny Pegger added, "No telling when they'll get tired of waiting. They aren't famous for patience."

Jones was glad to get upstairs and plunge into the business of giving away money with his new firm of Genius, Incorporated. Fortunately, there was plenty to take his mind off other things. First, they had to wedge their way to the door, aided by Polyphemus Ward's borrowed private detectives, who were there in force to conduct the investigations of applicants to Genius, Inc. By the time he had squirmed through the mob of applicants, Jones had a hearty respect for the power of advertising, the notice he had inserted in the newspapers having been approximately the size of his thumb. He also began to feel that giving away a hundred thousand might

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

finally be accomplished. He would have glowed over that, under other circumstances.

The first applicant for a thousand dollars without interest or security was an Italian who wanted a fruit stand. The next was a lady who wished to lease a rooming house, and the third was another Italian who wanted a fruit stand. Fourth came an aviator who needed a thousand to finish financing a flight across the Atlantic, a project about which Jones was enthusiastic until he discovered there was already a regular trans-Atlantic passenger air service via Bermuda. Then there was an Italian for a fruit stand, a baker who wished to go into business, a tailor, a truck farmer, and another Italian, but this one wanted to make spaghetti.

ABOUT eleven o'clock, Tray Marco telephoned. "Cough. Last chance. A hundred and seventy-two grand. Or it's curtains."

"Your statements," Jones said, "are cryptic and not quite clear."

"You savvy, don't you?"

"Er—I presume you think you can coerce me into returning the funds which I earned in your establishment last evening."

"Coerce?"

"I—to constrain by threat or force."

Tray Marco said: "My boys'll go to town if you don't kitty up." He banged down the receiver at his end of the wire.

Funny Pegger peered at Jones anxiously. "Tray Marco again, eh?"

"Well—yes."

Funny swallowed.

"How'd he sound?"

"Rather violent," Jones confessed. "He said something about going to town."

Funny Pegger groaned and sank into a chair. He grasped the back of his neck, as was his habit when he was trying to get something out of his fertile mind. "This is bad," he moaned.

"I," said Jones, "am not going to fret. I have one hundred—ah—two hundred and eleven thousand dollars, that is, to give away."

"Great grief! You're gonna give all your earnings?"

Jones nodded. "Exactly."

"But why?"

"In order, as you would put it, to do the job up in a wellbaked complexion." Jones smiled. "There is a million at stake, you know," he added, not unreasonably. "The million is to be my reward if I win, along with a job of disposing of the Ward millions to philanthropies."

"Somebody's got to look out for you!" Funny Pegger said desperately.

He wandered outside to sit in another chair and hold the back of his neck.

During the afternoon, Jones found himself losing trace of Funny Pegger. The Tray Marco possibilities were also pushed into the background temporarily. Genius, Incorporated, was doing a rushing business, and by four o'clock, the private detectives had okayed nearly a score of applicants, and Jones had reduced the firm capital by as many one-thousand dollar loans. He was pleased. Three or four boom days like this, and he would have fulfilled his bargain with old Polyphemus Ward.

At five o'clock, Jones optimistically told the other customers to come back tomorrow, and put on his hat. He found Funny Pegger outside, and noted that the gag man was in earnest consultation with several of the customers of Genius, Incorporated. When Funny Pegger saw Jones, he said, "It's all up to you, boys," and came over to Jones. The gag man seemed resigned to the future.

They got into a taxicab. Remembering what had happened that morning, Jones turned to look through the rear window. His apprehensions sprang up.

"We are being followed!" he gasped.

"How many cars?" Funny Pegger demanded.

"Oh, four or five at least."

"It ought to be quite a war," the gag man said grimly.

In a chastened mood, Jones reached Vix's apartment. He was inclined to examine the dusky doorman with an eye to the latter's potential abilities at gangster-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

repelling. And for the first time, the door of Vix's apartment seemed a fragile piece of equipment.

Vix made them fried chicken and waffles.

JONES was examining a wishbone somewhat wistfully when there was a knock on the door. Jones had a peculiar sensation up and down the back of his neck, and the feeling must have been telephatic, because Vix and Funny Pegger put down their implements.

"Er—who could that be?"

Funny Pegger took a deep breath. "The police," he said.

Jones winced and his stomach lost its desire for food as he conjured up an unpleasant assortment of perhapses . . . Perhaps the police had stopped seeking a largish young man with red hair and a remarkable red beard. Perhaps they were now looking for a largish young man who had dyed his red hair black. The biggest perhaps was the perhaps that they had traced him here. The knuckles tattooed the door again.

"That," Vix said, "*couldn't* be a cop."

Jones looked at her hopefully. "No?"

"It lacks," Vix explained, "the coppy quality."

Jones hunted around in his memory, trying to find someone else who might be visiting him. He sprang up—he had remembered something. He hurried toward the door with long strides.

"Glacia!" he exclaimed. "I lost Glacia somewhere last night!"

"If this is her, let her in," she ordered. "I'll go hunt the hatchet."

It wasn't Glacia. It was Forgetful Osborn, who still wore his disguise—curly dark wig, fake waxed mustache and full dress, although it was early in the evening for the latter. He looked as though the hounds were after him. Forgetful flew inside, slammed the door, locked it, then propped himself against the panel.

"I'm damned"—pant—"glad I"—pant—"found you!"

"Won't you sit down?" Jones suggested politely.

"I want—my—five grand," Forgetful puffed.

Jones looked solicitous. 'Er—won't you have a cup of coffee? You seem to need one."

"I'll have five grand! Quick!" Forgetful peered around the apartment. "Got a telephone? Maybe there's a plane leaving tonight."

"The telephone is that doll," Vix said, pointing at a corner.

Forgetful Osborn rushed to the corner, grabbed the doll, extricated the phone, and tried to hold it with one hand while he riffled through the directory with the other.

Jones walked to the agitated con man.

"I am," Jones stated, "crediting you with the five thousand, or grands, as you call them."

Forgetful Osborn looked up blankly. "Crediting?"

"Exactly. It follows, therefore, that you owe me only forty-five thousand dollars, or as I understand it, forty-five grands."

Forgetful went pale. His words stumbled. "What—what—"

"Of course, technically, there would be some interest due," Jones continued, "but we will charge that up to—ah—experience."

Forgetful Osborn peered at the door, then at Jones, and evidently concluded Jones was too much obstacle in the way of flight. He crabbed sidewise to a chair and sank into it.

"I told 'em so," he mumbled.

"Told them what?" Jones asked curiously.

"That you was something to look out for." Forgetful squinted at Jones. "You spotted me, huh? I knew it! I thought so last night."

Jones nodded. "Naturally. You have a false mustache and a wig, but you are still the absent-minded person who sold me a bogus orphan home for fifty thousand dollars."

There was a pause.

"We started to discuss forty-five thousand dollars you still owe me," Jones said firmly.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Forgetful Osborn swallowed large pieces of nothing. "I—I haven't got it."

"No?"

"Lyman Lee took it. He and Paul Shevinsky, Harold Hover and Tray Marco, hired me to pull the job on you. They gave me five hundred." The con man looked disgusted. "I never took on more trouble for five hundred."

Jones frowned. "Lyman Lee has my money, you say?"

Forgetful Osborn stared at Jones. "You'd better skip town."

"Eh?"

"Tray Marco!"

Jones swallowed uncomfortably. "What do you mean?"

"Tray Marco," said Forgetful Osborn, "has blowed his top."

"He—what?"

"Came unconnected. He's a wild boy. He thinks Lyman Lee and Paul Shevinsky and Harold Hover and me and you and Glacia and this girl here and this newspaper guy—he thinks *everybody* doublecrossed him."

"Er—did what?"

"He thinks this whole thing was a rig to take him for the hundred and seventy grand."

"Goodness!" Jones said.

"Tray Marco," said Forgetful, "has his boys together."

He moved uneasily.

"His boys?"

"His gorillas. They're looking for everybody. I went out the back door of my rooming house when they came in the front."

Jones frowned. "You mean that they contemplate violence?"

"The darned fools want to kill everybody."

THEN there was another knock on the door, which did not exactly soothe any of them. Forgetful Osborn flew out of his chair and turned white on his way through the handiest door, which happened to lead into a closet where he would be satisfactorily enclosed for the time. Funny Pegger sauntered to a window with a fire escape. Vix said, "Don't go to the door!" and Jones went to the door.

"Ah—who is it?" he called nervously.

"Lyman Lee."

On the theory that the devil never introduced himself by his true name if he was bent on any mischief, Jones opened the door.

Simultaneously, Vix said, "Count me out of this for reasons of my own!" and vanished into the kitchen.

Lyman Lee came in, looking worried, followed by two other worried people. The first was Paul Shevinsky; the second was Harold Hover.

"Er—how do you do," Jones said.

Lyman Lee spoke in low tones. "Jones," he said, "I do not want you to misunderstand this visit."

"I shall try not to," Jones announced.

"I thought it over seriously before I came," Lyman Lee explained. "I did not want to offend you. I did not want to aggravate the position."

"What position?" Jones asked, recalling that there were several.

"My position," replied Lyman Lee gravely, "wherein I find that you no longer consider me your friend."

"Oh."

"I am your friend, you know."

"Are you?" Jones looked thoughtful.

"Yes, indeed. Very much your friend. But I am sorry to say that you have been poisoned against me." Lyman Lee looked accusingly at Funny Pegger. "Poisoned," he added, "by certain persons who have an unreasonable dislike for me."

"Is that so?" Jones remarked. Funny opened his mouth, then closed it.

Lyman Lee nodded. He took out a white silk handkerchief almost large enough to be a sheet and dabbed at his forehead. Obviously, he was a young man trying to sell a bill of goods under difficulties. "Would you consider putting aside everything that has happened?" he asked.

"Gladly!" Jones said enthusiastically. "I would put Tray Marco aside with the most willingness of all."

Lyman Lee winced. "I hoped you would

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

let me give you some advice," Lyman Lee said earnestly.

"Advice," Jones agreed, "is certainly what I need."

"Jones," Lee said, "you've got to give Tray Marco back his money."

"Yes?"

Lyman Lee looked relieved. "That's the smart thing," he said. "I figured you would know what was good for all of us."

"The 'yes', said Jones, "was purely a conversational stimulant."

"It was—what?"

"It didn't mean anything," Jones explained. "I have not the slightest intention of giving Tray Marco any money. On the contrary, I expect to collect fifty thousand dollars from you.'

Lyman Lee straightened the front of his coat and looked stunned. "Are you crazy?"

"Chestnut," Jones remarked, "is a name variously designating a nut, an elderly joke, or a callous on the leg of an ass."

Lyman Lee began to get sunset coloration.

"You are trying," Jones continued, "to pull your chestnuts out of the fire." He took a step forward. "You swindled me out of fifty thousand dollars. I now have a witness to prove this fact. The only reason I do not have you arrested at once is because I am giving you a chance to return the money. The fifty thousand will do humanity more good than seeing you behind bars, where, I will add, you belong."

"Tray Marco," said Lyman Lee wildly, "is going to shoot somebody if he don't get his money back."

Jones grabbed Lyman Lee and gave that gentleman's well-tailored behind a kick.

"If you wish," Jones shouted at Funny Pegger, "you can help me throw them out!"

Jones opened the door with one hand while he held Lyman Lee with the other.

Tray Marco said, "Thanks. I was wondering how we would get into the nest."

MARCO did not have a gun. Jones looked, first thing. Marco walked into the apartment with stiff-legged wariness, then took a quick step to one side to get out of the way of his boys who were behind him and came in after him. They had the guns.

Forgetful Osborn sidled toward a window. Tray Marco said, "You lose something over there?" Forgetful stopped.

Jones said, "This intrusion is unwelcome—" and shut up when he found the black gullet of an automatic pistol looking at him.

Tray Marco said: "Case the lay."

Two men searched the apartment and hauled Vix out of the kitchen, after which one of them gave the *coup de grace* to that part of proceedings by announcing, "The joint cases clean."

"Any do-ray?" asked Tray Marco.

"Not a red."

"Frisk the gulls."

Jones judged from the adeptness displayed that the friskers had previous experience.

"No rods or shives," one stated.

"Any flash?"

"Just cackle."

"No folding jack, eh?"

"Nix."

With firmness, Jones put away an impulse to ask for a translation. The impulse, he realized, was out of place. "Er—what can we do for you gentlemen?" he asked nervously.

Tray Marco said: "We'll do for ourselves."

A tightness came into Jones' throat as he got his first close look at Tray Marco's eyes. They reminded him of chips off a glacier.

"Relax," Tray Marco advised. "We got some more company coming."

He glanced at Lyman Lee.

Jones was surprised. "Company—"

Tray Marco showed his teeth unpleasantly. "I'm putting on a little get-together. I thought everybody would like to know that I expect somebody to hand me two hundred thousand dollars."

"Two hundred?" Jones frowned. "But I won—er—earned one hundred and seventy-two thousand and ninety-eight dollars. Ah—how do you account for the difference?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tray Marco said: "Costs of collection."

Someone rapped on the door, and Tray Marco took out a gun, held it behind his back, opened the door, presented the gun quickly and said, "Don't run away, chick. Come on in."

Glacia entered. Glacia, with fingertips pressing tightly to her cheeks and her eyes staring, and both her face and her hands slowly losing color. "But I received—a telegram—from Jones," Glacia said, with halts.

Tray Marco looked interested. "You did?"

"Yes. It—asked me to—come here."

"Did it say Jones loved you and nothing you had done mattered?"

"I—yes."

"Then it was the one I sent," Tray Marco said.

"But why—"

"You're part of my collection," Tray Marco said. "Sit down."

Glacia sat down and her lovely face proceeded to lose all of its color. Jones now expected Tray Marco to proceed with whatever he had in mind, but he was disappointed. Marco perched on the edge of a table, put a fresh cigarette between the fingers of his left hand, and waited patiently.

When the delay got on Jones' nerves, he tried to temper it with a quotation.

"Wait," he said tentatively, "means an ambush, a snare, a horn of the oboe type, a piece of music sung by serenaders, as well as to rest in expectation."

"I can't stand much of that," Tray Marco said grimly.

"Er—what are we waiting on?" Jones persisted.

"The other guest."

"Who—"

Tray Marco said: "Shut up!"

For lack of anything else to do, Jones began to notice that Lyman Lee was staring at Vix most strangely.

A CURL of smoke rose lazily from Tray Marco's cigarette. One of his men began to eat peanuts, extracting the salted goobers from a paper sack and popping them into his mouth, crunching them with his teeth, licking and popping his lips, occasionally sucking in.

Twenty minutes later a fist practically caved in a panel of the door.

Those in the room exchanged looks, understanding looks. Instinct told every one of them who had crashed knuckles against that door. Such hard-fisted violence meant—old Polyphemus Ward.

Vix said, "Oh!" in a loud strange tone.

Jones stared at Vix. He had never seen her expression so queer.

Tray Marco went to the door, opened it, and stood so that old Polyphemus Ward could see only Tray Marco.

"Who are you?" roared Polyphemus Ward. "Where is Jones? What do you want?"

Tray Marco said: "I wanted to let you inspect a piece of my personal property."

"Personal property? What personal property?"

Tray Marco said: "This." He let one of the world's richest men look into the destructive end of his large blue automatic pistol.

Polyphemus Ward had seen gun snouts before. He cocked his head to one side and peered to see if the safety catch was off.

Tray Marco said: "I'm Tray Marco. If you haven't heard of me, you should have. Sit down!"

Polyphemus Ward yelled, "Say what kind of locoed—"

"Sit down!" Tray Marco interrupted.

The financier began to get a lobster color. "Who do you think you're talking to?" he bellowed. "I've heard of you, all right! And you've heard of me. I've roped and hogtied plenty of your kind. You tinhorn, if you think you can run a whizzer on me, you're riding the wrong range." He took a step forward. "I'm gonna take that hardware off you and make you eat it!" he roared.

He took another step. Tray Marco took a step backward. Most of his teeth were showing.

Jones began to have a rather low opinion

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the self-control of his possible future employer. Old Polyphemus Ward wasn't bluffing Tray Marco....Tray Marco was going to kill him if something didn't happen.

Something did happen, and something quite astounding. It occurred when Polyphemus Ward, angling sidewise to get closer to Tray Marco and death, chanced to turn enough to see Vix. The auburn-haired young woman's gaze met Polyphemus Ward's.

The two of them stared at each other with hypnotic intentness. Their lips parted, parted at almost identical instant; their lips moved a little; neither of them made any sound.

Old Polyphemus Ward took in a deep breath, shut his eyes and fell on his face on the floor. Vix ran to the financier, dropped at his side, and her throat ached with apprehension.

Tray Marco sprang back.

"Watch it!" he flung. "Something screwy here!"

Jones felt confused. Events had turned into rabbits that were coming too fast out of the magician's silk hat. There was obviously a connection between Polyphemus Ward and Vix. Jones realized he had suspected this before. On an occasion or two, Vix had reacted strangely when Polyphemus Ward was mentioned. Vix had also known Glacia, and Glacia was distinctly not of the circle to which Vix belonged at the present time. Vix had known a great deal about Polyphemus Ward, so much so that Jones had been led to suspect some kind of an association, a nice one, of course. The discrepancy was that Vix claimed to be a radio singer. Jones perceived that Tray Marco was staring at Vix with intense interest. The man began to grin thinly.

"Get the dame!" he commanded. "That one."

His men looked blank. Tray Marco said: "Kayo her. Take her out to the cars. If anybody says anything, tell 'em she got tight and passed out."

One of Tray Marco's boys said, "You—we—you—"

Tray Marco said: "We're gonna snatch her."

"Snatch?"

"Sure. Get going."

"But the Feds! The G-men—"

"It's worth the chance," Tray Marco said grimly. "It's a chance at the biggest snatch in the world. It's worth a million, if it's worth a dime."

"A million?"

"She's the old buzzard's girl."

"His sweetie?"

Tray Marco said: "Not his sweetie, you fool. She's old Polyphemus Ward's missing daughter."

CHAPTER XXIX

EVERYTHING HAPPENS AT ONCE

JONES felt rather proud of himself, because he had reached an identical conclusion a few moments earlier. It was all perfectly logical. Polyphemus Ward's daughter had left home because she was afraid she'd get to be like her male parent. But it was natural that the girl would want to keep tab on her father and see how he was taking her absence. It was logical for her to use Funny Pegger, the moneybags' public relations counsel, to do the checking up. That explained how Vix happened to know Funny Pegger in the first place. Jones saw that it was all clear enough.

Tray Marco ordered: "Get her out of here!"

Three men grabbed Vix. She struggled, struck at them. One of them struck back and hit her mouth. A red string of blood came off her lip and wriggled over her chin.

Something hot and wild blew up inside Jones, and he jumped, swung a fist at Tray Marco and connected. Tray Marco very nearly turned end for end. After he hit the floor, he kicked, his hands twitched, and his gun let out noise, lead and cardite smell.

The door opened. A man came in. A dark, short, wide man, whom Jones thought looked familiar. The man ran and grabbed one of the boys struggling with Vix. Jones then recognized the dark, short, wide man as one of the beneficiaries of a thousand-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dollar loan. More men came in the door. Some of them had clubs, others had bottles. In from the window fire-escape came another man. He was an Oriental gentleman who wished to start a laundry. Jones became confused. More guns were going off. The Chinamen shouted in Mandarin. The others shouted in English.

Harold Hover, who had been stumbling around wildly, holding his hands above his head, ran suddenly and jumped out of the window. Another man instantly jumped out after him. And a third man climbed half out of the window but came back in when he saw three floors down to a hard concrete courtyard.

Jones upended the table at Paul Shevinsky, made a chest-hit, and the rush of air blew a set of false teeth out of the shyster lawyer's mouth. The man rolled on the floor and coughed. Jones headed for Lyman Lee; he had a large juicy bone to pick with Lyman Lee. But Funny Pegger got there first with a chair, and turned Lyman Lee's profile into a difficult job for a plastic surgeon.

"I hated him before you did," the gag man explained to Jones.

The fighting was down on the floor for a while, before it slowly subsided. A final fist smack or two, one splintering report of a chair, and comparative quiet came inside the apartment.

However, an uproar arose outside as excited tenants dashed around inquiring what had happened, and spreading rumor that the G-men had cornered another public enemy and were fighting it out.

Jones grinned widely at the wreckage, at Funny Pegger, at Tray Marco, at everyone. The fireworks were decidedly over. But he was wondering who had lighted the fuse.

The Italian of the fruit stand, the Chinaman of the laundry, the baker, two Irishmen who had received funds for trucks, and assorted other clients of Genius, Inc., stood around and grinned back at Jones. They seemed pleased with themselves.

"I am surprised to see you gentlemen," Jones remarked when he had recovered his breath.

"Sure, and we figured yez wouldn't be mindin'," said one Irishman.

"Oh, no," Jones said. "Not at all."

"Hope velly much you all lightee," volunteered the Celestial.

Personally, Jones was feeling fine, but he glanced around to see about the others. With two exceptions, everyone was present, and after more or less patching up, would be able to get into a taxicab or a police wagon. The exceptions were Harold Hover and the other man who had jumped out of the window.

Several, however, were not moving.

"I cannot understand how you gentlemen"—Jones surveyed his benefactors—"how you gentlemen came to arrive so conveniently."

Boze, the taxi driver, said, "Boss, yo' sure ain't think us is gwine let nobody make an angel out'n you, does you?"

"But how did you know about the angel proclivities of the—ah—boys?"

"Oh, dat was what de vice president done tell us all about."

"De—I mean, the vice president of what?"

Funny Pegger said: "He means me."

"You?"

"Sure." The gag man grinned. I'm the vice president of Genius, Inc."

"Why," Jones said, "I didn't know that."

"Well, I intended to get around to telling you. This other thing was sort of on my mind. I knew you couldn't call in police protection. The cops want to arrest you. So I thought of tipping these people off. They're your friends. I told them the whole story. They volunteered to see nothing happened to you."

JONES was touched. He had tried for several days to throw bread on the waters, had finally cast part of it without it bouncing back, and now some of it had already returned. The occasion seemed to call for a quotation.

"The word grin," he announced, "means, variously, a noose for hanging persons, a trap, or an instrument of torture, as well as to draw back the lips from the teeth to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

show merriment or good humor. Er—the latter is my present impulse."

An additional client of Genius, Incorporated, came in through the door. He was a fat man who stuttered and who had been financed for a lunchroom, and he seemed perturbed.

He said: "The gug-guy who fell outa the window kik-kik-kik-kik—"

"It has been my experience," offered Funny Pegger, "that a drink of water helps."

"—kik-killed the German captain," finished the future proprietor of a lunchroom.

Jones took a step forward. *"What?"*

The fat man said, "He was huh-hired by Luh-Lyman Lee. His name is Hover. He used germs to do the job. He thinks he's duh-dyin', but he ain't."

"What," Jones inquired, "is wrong with him?"

"He luh-lit sitting down."

There was some doubt in Jones' mind about the court value of a confession from a man who had descended freely for three stories and landed seated. The question revolved around the number of witnesses present at the confessing.

"How many persons overheard this statement?" he asked anxiously.

"A dozen, anyway."

Jones relaxed. A dozen witnesses should convince a jury by sheer majority.

"Goodness!" he said wildly.

Funny Pegger peered at him. "Now what's wrong?"

"I do believe," Jones said, "that I haven't a trouble left, comparatively speaking."

At this point old Polyphemus Ward grumbled, turned over on his back and sat up, then peered around at the battlefield.

"Who hit me from behind?" he roared.

* * *

On a typical early September day in New York City—it was drizzling rain steadily—Jones tipped back in a swivel chair, glanced at the clock on his desk, and noted that it was now thirty days to the hour since he had stepped ashore from the Polyphemus Ward yacht. The occasion called for a pronouncement.

"Months," he declared, "are of several types, namely: The calendar month, the lunar month, and the synodic, anomalistic, nodical, dracontic, tropical, sidereal, solar and consecution months, not including the colloquial month of Sundays."

The Jones desk was an impressive affair of mahogany, ornamented with six telephones, and an article resembling a midget radio for communicating with Vice President Funny Pegger in the office next door. There was a dictaphone and a conference chair and the walls were mahogany, paneled with white, the windows offered an excellent view of Radio City, if anyone cared to look.

On the desk, anchored with a paperweight so that it would not blow away if there had been a draft, lay a greenish-colored slip of paper. This was a check, duly signed by Polyphemus Ward.

For the tenth or twelfth time, Jones scrutinized the figures on the check. As on the previous ten or twelve occasions, he looked rather pleased. "One million dollars," he said aloud, just to hear how the sum reacted on the ear.

One of his new secretaries appeared in the door.

"A lady," she announced, "to see Mr. Jones."

"Er—which lady?"

"Glacia Montignal de Grandrieu."

It struck Jones as appropriately synonymous for Glacia to appear so hot on the heels of mention of a million dollars.

"Show her in," he ordered.

He watched the door expectantly, and he was not disappointed. A moment after Glacia appeared, there was a bump-bump inside his chest. He relaxed. If by chance he had not bumped, he would have been worried, convinced that his reflexes were off. If you were normal, you at once bumped when you saw Glacia at her best.

And today Glacia was definitely her best. She gave him her most electric smile.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Darling," she murmured, "you've been neglecting me."

"Ah—have I?"

"Of course," Glacia admitted, "you have been terribly busy, what with the trial of Lyman Lee, Tray Marco, Paul Shevinsky and Hover for murdering that poor German liner-captain. Do you think they will be electrocuted?"

Jones frowned. "I am afraid so. A foreign gentleman by the name of Adolph Hitler keeps cabling that there will be another war if they aren't."

Glacia sighed.

"You naughty boy!" she exclaimed.

"Er—"

"You haven't called me once! You might have. Just one tiny time."

"I telephoned you half an hour ago," Jones reminded.

"Your secretaries," continued Glacia dramatically, "always said you were out. I was heartbroken."

"I—you were?"

"I was distraught."

"Distraught?"

"Actually ill!"

"Goodness!" Jones said.

He took a moment to put his more impressionable emotions back in the box, then arose. Of late, he had become an addict of the motion pictures, and as a result, in taking Glacia in his arms, his technique showed great improvement over the last occasion nearly a month previous.

"Pardon me."

INVARIABLY, when he had kissed Glacia before, there had been explosions. Not just a bang. Explosions! Something distinctly worth remembering, usually starting at his toes, and getting more cataclysmic as it climbed. This time, it started off all right—but got about to his ankles and fizzled.

"That," said Jones cheerfully, "is all I wanted to know."

"Darling, I don't understand!" Glacia was astounded.

"Er—it didn't happen."

"What didn't happen?"

"The explosion."

"Explosion?"

"For the first time," Jones explained, "there wasn't any."

"But, darling—"

"I am rather pleased." Jones' smile widened. "The event proves conclusively that it would be a mistake for our engagement to continue."

"Mistake—"

"I do not," said Jones, "wish to be engaged to anyone who does not cause me to explode."

Glacia's glamour slipped a trifle. "I do not understand!"

"It's off. Starting now, it is off. Our engagement."

Glacia took a step forward, put a forefinger against Jones' large chest and tapped.

"Listen, my pet!" she said. "You're engaged to me! If you think you're not, you're crazy. I'll sue you for every penny you ever hoped to have. I'll—"

"Would you mind leaving?" Jones asked.

"Listen, you iceberg hitch-hiker—"

"Either get out," Jones said gravely, "or I shall take you by the nape of the neck and the equivalent of the seat of the pants, and throw you out!"

Glacia glared. However, when Jones took a purposeful forward step, she wheeled and fled through the door.

Hardly had Glacia made her departure when Vix appeared in the same doorway and gazed quizzically at Jones. He gazed back, thinking she was rather remarkable this morning. Vix was rather remarkable any morning for that matter. She lacked several things that Glacia had, but he heartily approved of the shortcomings. Today Vix wore a trim rust outfit and a saucy little hat which sat on her wealth of auburn hair and went very well with her pert little face.

"There," Vix remarked, "went a woman who looked as if she'd been fighting for her honor."

"I—honor had very little to do with it," Jones stated uncomfortably.

He swallowed several times, and realized

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they were in the middle of a silence, the overly still kind of a silence that frequently precedes a stroke of lightning.

"I—ah," Jones said. "That is—well—"

Vix tilted her bright little face to one side. "Word trouble, eh?"

"No, no, not at all," Jones said. "It—er—ah—well—that is—I guess so."

"That's too bad."

"I—yes."

"It's really something."

"Well—"

"Well?"

"I—well?"

"We're certainly making progress."

"I—oh, my!" Jones said miserably.

Vix had been waiting patiently and rather expectantly, but it began to appear that this might go on and on far into the day, and she showed traces of exasperation. She threw the victim a rope.

"Love does it," she declared. "Also a bump on the head."

"I—is that so?" Jones mumbled.

The silence returned and if anything, it was more silent. Even the clock on the desk seemed to bog down with its ticking. Jones heard his own loud breathing.

"With that opening," Vix said disgustedly, "you fall down!"

Jones gulped. "Ah—" he said. "Well—"

"Darling," Vix said desperately, "what are you waiting for?"

"Great Scott!" Jones burst out. "What am I?"

There was a kind of paralyzed moment or two when it seemed there was not going to be any explosion on this occasion, either, but that was misleading. The blast was just winding up, crouching, digging in its spikes, and getting set.

Old Polyphemus Ward was a man who liked to come through doors yelling at people, and when he stamped onto the scene, he bellowed, "What is keeping you? My lawyers are here to draw up those papers about your job. D'you think they've got all day?"

He stopped and took a second look. "What is this?" he yelled.

Jones came up for air, but is was necessary to get his breath. "Explosions," he said.

"What?"

"Explosions," Jones said, "that assuredly are explosions."

THE END

Feature Stories and Novelets by

JUDSON P. PHILIPS ◦ RICHARD SALE
CORNELL WOOLRICH ◦ CLEVE F. ADAMS

+ PLUS +

A Complete 50,000 Word Mystery Novel

THE BLACK WIDOW
by JOHN K. BUTLER

Two Magazines for the Price of One in the New Issue of

DOUBLE DETECTIVE

Now on sale at all Newsstands

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WE HAVE made it a habit of late to let you know, on the first of each month, a little of what lies ahead for you in ARGOSY. This week, because we have so many fine stories scheduled for future issues, and because we're starting a new year as well as a new month, we're going to peer even a little further into the future.

First of all, of course, there's the new Burroughs serial, *Carson of Venus,* starting next week. We believe that this story, a continuation of the thrilling adventures of Carson Napier on Venus, is one of the finest things Mr. Burroughs has written in a long time. But we aren't resting on that alone. The following week Garnett Radcliffe, the author of *Doomed Liner,* comes back to us with a long novel, *London Skies Are Falling Down*—an absorbing story of revolt in London and a strange ray that pierced the fog from above, seeking its victims.

Ere you've gotten well into these two tales, we're coming right back at you with a new novel of the old West by Luke Short. It's the kind of Western we've been looking for, not the hard-riding, shoot-'em-down sort, but one filled with real people and genuine color. You won't want to lay it down. (No title as yet.)

After that, who should appear but our old friend Borden Chase, in a gripping story of New York cops on the trouble-wagon, at present entitled: *Hell's Kitchen Has a Pantry.* As exciting as *Blue-White and Perfect,* as real and moving as *Sandhog,* this yarn has already been snapped up by Universal Pictures before we've even had time to publish it.

You've been asking for a historical serial. Remembering the high standard set by *The Golden Knight,* we've been hunting for one. We've found it. Late in February *A Ship of the Line,* by C. S. Forester, will appear. If you've already read this author's *Beat to Quarters,* published last year by Little, Brown and Company, then you already know that sturdy British sea-dog, Captain Hornblower—but whether you have or not, you're going to find this rousing yarn of battles and loves at sea in the days of Napoleon a rare treat indeed.

We'd like to go on now about some of the novelets and shorts lined up ahead; but we haven't the space. We haven't the space because the Poetry Department demands it. Usually, we keep the bards locked up in a gloomy loft on the floor above, but—overcome with seasonal sentiment—we let them out last week and, since then, they've scribbling doggerel on bits of waste paper. Pick-a-back, a moment ago, they came rhyming up, the lyric wretches, and this is what they handed us. They call it, in their forthright way, *Ode to the Authors of Dear Old Arg: Circa* '38. And here, so help us, it is:

Ho for the New Year!— the weather's fierce.
And it's time for benisons to Frank R. Pierce.
And here's to Four Corners' favorite son, Roscoe,
We wish him Legions of luck with a dash of tabasco.
And to fans with dewlaps and fans with juleps,
And give you a favorite—Judson Philips.
The old year is sown and we'll plow new furrows

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Wishing well, meanwhile, to Edgar Rice Burroughs.
And, while we're about it, let's heave a bag at
Our esteemed contributor, Mr. A. Leo Zagat;
And Drink You Deep, sir, of the season's cheer
While we pause to wish a Happy New Year
To our old Genius, né Jones, Dent;
Oh, Lester, may '38 bring in the rent!
And pause, all you Misters and merry Madams,
To sing a Hosanna to Eustace L. Adams.

Chorus:
Oh we've authors big and authors small
And it's Happy New Year to them all!

So, the Yule is done, and more Wassail spare us,
But let's not forget to cheer Foster-Harris.
And there'll be a Strike and a lot of squawkin's
If we don't give our best to jolly John Hawkins.
And, while there's time, we'll wish the best, sir,
To that pixilated prosodist, our friend, Richard Wormser.
But let's not forget sweet Martin McCall,
The most mysterious scrivener of them all.
Then, for a snack, we must go to the cupboard
And toss a bone westward to L. Ron Hubbard.
So ordered, so be it, so Orders is Orders,
Upon old '37 babe '38 borders.
Time marches on, and the years flow like sand,
But we have always with us that rare spirit, Max Brand.
And in the New Year where he's carved out his niche,
We'll pause and kowtow to Cornell Woolrich.

Chorus:
Oh we've authors big and authors small
And it's Happy New Year to them all!

So ring the welkin and keep the pace
While we toss an orchid to Borden Chase.
And give a new six-gun with a loud report
To that King Colt cowhand, laconic Luke Short.
To Chicago we'll send the tongue of a snark
For Leo Lawson Rogers to feed to Dale Clark.
And if, to this gesture, there should be a rebuttal,
We'll call on Sheriff Henry, via W. C. Tuttle.
Oh, please keep them all hearty and hale,
Make the tarpon and tuna like Richard Sale.
Make all authors happy, especialy Sinclair Gluck;
May the New Year bring him all kinds of luck.
Let joy undefiled assail T. T. Flynn,
And keep him in the good shape he's in.
And by no means must we leave in the lurch
Our good Southern companion, Henry F. Church.

Chorus:
Oh we've authors big and authors small
And it's Happy New Year to them all!

Peal the bells and banish all malice.
Regards to Georges Surdez, Bruce and Challis.
To H. Bedford-Jones serve rich marrow bones;
Brew strong tea, and toast and golden scones!
Elston, Chidsey, Carse and Leinster
Know ye that we are no rhymster,
But, Happy New Year! Wait—odds bodkins!
We nearly forgot Richard Howells Watkins!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Well, now that the poets have had their say, let's go on with the serious things of life—by which we mean the mail. Since this area seems mostly concerned with authors this week we will finish up with a selection from our Mail-From-Authors-Department. To-wit, to-woo:

RICHARD SALE

A Swap for Stonewall Jackson, despite my faith in Cork Wilson who told the tale, is historically innacurate. According to the records, it was General Hunter who raided Lexington and this was in 1864. At that time Stonewall Jackson was already dead. There is a possibility, however, that Phil Sheridan reached the town in his Valley campaign and that Jackson was there at the time in 1863. In any case, I did not want to argue with Cork Wilson's memory, which is eighty-four years old at this writing, preferring not to spoil a good story. Jackson, today, is buried in Lexington in the little cemetery up Main Street, and if you should chance to stop over in the town sometime, you will undoubtedly hear again of how Johnny Ragoo saved the General from the Yankees and will, like myself, want desperately to believe in it.

Pelham Manor, N. Y.

Truth, it appears, is not only stranger than fiction, but much harder to make a good story out of. In any case, it's almost certain that if Stonewall Jackson and Sheridan *had* met in Lexington something like this would have happened.

We're sure that most readers will sympathize with Mr. Sale and condone him for his desire to believe Cork Wilson in preference to the history books.

CARSON OF VENUS

Edgar Rice Burroughs has never written a finer, more imaginative tale than this new story which continues the thrilling experiences of Carson Napier on cloud-wrapped Venus. Searching for the lovely Duare's lost land of Vepaja, Carson meets with the fierce fighting women of Houtomai, is embroiled in the wars of Korva. A serial novel by

EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

THE STOLEN PASSPORT

Expatriate Dan Harden comes home! New-York bound with Valerie Borden, Dan is plunged into a mystery that he wants no part of—until he discovers that it is the mystery he wants most of. A complete novelet by

FREDERICK C. PAINTON

DAISIES WON'T TELL

There is a skeleton in every family closet, and in every village there is a black sheep. Four Corners was no exception. Andy, the doctor's son, disgraced his name and fled to Australia. Fourteen years later, when people were riding tandem bicycles and singing "Daisy, daisy, give me your answer, do . . ." Andy returned. He came not to worship at the family shrine, but to bury it. . . . An exceptionally fine story by

THEODORE ROSCOE

COMING IN NEXT WEEK'S ARGOSY—JANUARY 8th

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HOT LEMONADE

RECOMMENDED BY MANY DOCTORS FOR COLDS, BECAUSE IT HAS AN ALKALINE FACTOR

THIS SAME **ALKALINE FACTOR**

IS IN **LUDEN'S** MENTHOL COUGH DROPS 5¢

THEY HELP YOU TO RESIST COLDS!

FROM A MEDICAL JOURNAL: "The researches (of doctors) led them to believe that colds result from an acid condition. To overcome this, they prescribe various alkalies."

Health Book Free

TELLS STARTLING FOOD FACTS!

If you suffer from RHEUMATISM, SKIN DISORDERS, CONSTIPATION, NERVOUSNESS or other common ailment, you owe it to yourself to write for a free copy of the revealing book by John X. Loughran, Ph.D., radio health commentator, author, lecturer. Reveals the amazing curative powers of certain foods. Shows how scores of ailing persons have found vibrant new health by natural methods. This may be the exact knowledge you have been seeking to open the door to health and happier living. Write for your free copy today. No cost. No obligation.

20TH CENTURY HEALTH INSTITUTE, Department 25L
742 South Hill Street Los Angeles, California

High School Course at Home

Many Finish in 2 Years

Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Course equivalent to resident school work — prepares you for entrance to college. Standard H. S. texts supplied — Diploma. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. High school education is very important for advancement in business and industry and socially. Don't be handicapped all your life. Be a High School graduate. Start your training now. Free Bulletin on request. No obligation.

American School, Dept. H-11, Drexel at 58th. Chicago

FREE TO PIPE SMOKERS

Send for free copy of "PIPE & POUCH," America's first smoker's catalog-magazine, showing world's finest assortment pipes and tobaccos; also articles by Christopher Morley, John Erskine and other eminent authors. Write—

The PIPE AND TOBACCO GUILD, Ltd.
Dept. 151 79 Madison Avenue, New York

ARE YOU INVENTIVE

OTHER MEN have read and profited by our free books, "Patent Protection" and "Selling Inventions." Fully explain many interesting points to inventors and illustrate important mechanical principles. With books we also send free "Evidence of Invention" form. Prompt service, reasonable fees, deferred payments, thirty-nine years' experience. Avoid risk of delay. Write immediately to: Victor J. Evans & Co., Registered Patent Attorneys, 45-A, Victor Building, Washington, D. C.

WANTED ORIGINAL POEMS SONGS

For Immediate Consideration . . . Send poems to

COLUMBIAN MUSIC PUBLISHERS, Ltd.
Dept. 160, Toronto, Can.

Law!

LEARN AT HOME

Are you adult, alert, ambitious, willing to study? Investigate LAW! We guide you step by step—furnish all texts, including 14-volume Law Library. Training prepared by leading law professors and given by members of bar. Degree of LL. B. conferred. Low cost, easy terms. Send NOW for Free, 64-page "Law Training for Leadership."

LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 158-L Chicago

NEW TYPE CHEAP OIL BURNER

Sweeping the Country!!

COOK and HEAT Without Coal or Wood

In Your Present Stove or Furnace—HOTTER—CHEAPER—No Dirt or Ashes—Twice the Heat Quick at SMALLER COST.

COOK and HEAT for LESS

Amazing oil burner burns cheap oil a new way, without pre-generating or clogging up; quick intense heat at TURN OF VALVE.

AGENTS Salesmen **BIG MONEY**

Slips Into Any STOVE RANGE or FURNACE.

SENT ON TRIAL Prove it cuts fuel bills, pays for itself quickly by what it saves at our risk. Offer of **FREE SAMPLE** TO AGENTS. Write quick, be first to learn how to end drudgery, dirt and ashes of coal and wood and make big money, spare or full time—mail 1c postcard today.

UNITED FACTORIES, A-617 Factory Building, Kansas City, Mo.

U. S. GOVERNMENT JOBS!

START

$1260 to $2100 Year

Many 1938 Appointments expected. Men—Women. Common Education Usually Sufficient. Mail Coupon today sure.

COUPON

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE,
Dept. K251, Rochester, N. Y.

Sirs: Rush to me without charge (1) 32-page book with list of U. S. Government jobs. (2) Tell me immediately how to qualify for one of these jobs.

Name.....

Address.....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Do smokers appreciate the Costlier Tobaccos in Camels?"

A QUESTION ASKED BY MANY PEOPLE —

THE BEST ANSWER IS...

Camels are the Largest-Selling cigarette in America!

HELEN HICKS, golf champion: "I smoke Camels constantly without a sign of 'jittery nerves.' I know Camels are the last word in mildness."

SIR HUBERT WILKINS: "Where I go, Camels go with me. Camels help make my monotonous explorer's diet digest more smoothly."

Camels have given more people more pleasure than any other cigarette!

AND this didn't happen by chance. Camels are the largest-selling cigarette in America ... and in the *world* ... because people *can* and *do* appreciate finer, costlier tobaccos.

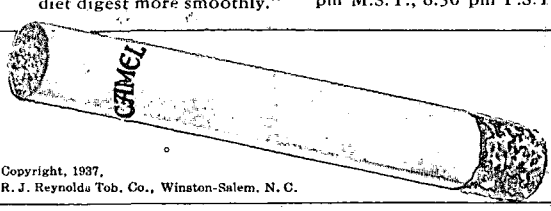
Millions of men and women have given Camels the severest test — they have smoked them steadily. And have learned to trust those finer tobaccos to give them more of the pleasure they want in smoking. If you are not a Camel smoker, try them. See if you, too, don't find more enjoyment in *Camel's finer, costlier tobaccos.*

NEW CAMEL CARAVAN—2 great shows in a single hour's entertainment!

Includes "Jack Oakie College" and Benny Goodman's "Swing School"! Every Tuesday night at 9:30 pm E.S.T., 8:30 pm C.S.T., 7:30 pm M.S.T., 6:30 pm P.S.T., WABC-CBS.

JOSELYN LIBBY, private secretary: "When I feel fatigued, I take time out for a Camel and get a quick 'lift.'"

SHIP'S ENGINEER, G. Buckingham: "I've smoked Camels for years. I never tire of them."



Camels are a matchless blend of finer, MORE EXPENSIVE TOBACCOS —Turkish and Domestic.

Copyright, 1937,
R. J. Reynolds Tob. Co., Winston-Salem, N. C.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED